

The Spiritual Combat

Together with
The Treatise of Inward Peace

A New Translation from the Italian of
Father Lorenzo Scupoli

Theatine



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THE SPIRITUAL COMBAT.

"Nou coronabitur nisi qui legitime certaverit."

2 Tim. ii. 5

CH. I.—OF THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION—OF THE STRUGGLE REQUISITE FOR ITS ATTAINMENT—AND OF THE FOUR THINGS NEEDFUL IN THIS CONFLICT.

WOULDEST thou attain in Christ the height of perfection, and by a nearer and nearer approach to thy God become one spirit with Him? Before undertaking this greatest and noblest of all imaginable enterprises, thou must first learn what constitutes the true and perfect spiritual life. For many have made it to consist exclusively in austerities, maceration of the flesh, hair-shirts, disciplines, long vigils and fasts, and other like bodily hardships and penances. Others, especially women, fancy they have made great progress therein, if they say many vocal prayers, hear many Masses and long offices, frequent many churches, receive many communions. Others (and those sometimes among cloistered religious) are persuaded that perfection depends wholly upon punctual attendance in choir, upon silence, solitude, and regularity. And thus, some in these, others

in various similar actions, suppose that the foundations of perfection may be laid.

But it is not so indeed; for as some of these are means to acquire grace, others fruits of grace, they cannot be held to constitute Christian perfection and the true life of grace. They are unquestionably most powerful means, in the hands of those who use them well and discreetly, of acquiring grace in order to gain strength and vigour against their own sinfulness and weakness, to defend themselves against our common enemies, to supply all those spiritual aids so necessary to all the servants of God, and especially to beginners in the spiritual life. Again, they are fruits of grace in truly spiritual persons, who chastise the body because it has offended its Creator, and in order to keep it low and submissive in His service; who keep silence and live solitary that they may avoid the slightest offence against their Lord, and converse with heaven; who attend divine worship, and give themselves to works of piety; who pray and meditate on the life and passion of our Lord, not from curiosity or sensible pleasure, but that they may know better and more deeply their own sinfulness, and the goodness and mercy of God,—enkindle ever more and more within their hearts the love of God and the hatred of themselves, following the Son of God with the cross upon their shoulders in the way of self-abnegation; who frequent the holy sacraments, to the glory of His divine majesty, to unite themselves more closely with God, and to gain new strength against His enemies.

But these external works, though all most holy in themselves, may yet, by the fault of those who use them as the foundation of their spiritual building, prove a more fatal occasion of ruin than open sins. Such persons leave their hearts unguarded to the mercy of their own inclinations, and exposed to the lurking deceits of the devil, who, seeing them out of the direct road, not only lets them continue these exercises with satisfaction, but leads them in their own vain imagination to expatiate on the delights of paradise, and to fancy themselves to be borne aloft amidst the angelic choir and to feel God within them. Sometimes they find themselves absorbed in high, mysterious, and ecstatic meditations, and, forgetful of the world and of all that it contains, they believe themselves to be caught up to the third heaven.

But the life and conversation of such persons prove the depth of the delusion in which they are held, and their great distance from the perfection after which we are inquiring; for in all things, great and small, they desire to be preferred and placed above others; they are wedded to their own opinion, and obstinate in their own will; and, blind to their own faults, they are busy and diligent observers and critics of the deeds and words of others.

But touch only with a finger their point of honour, a certain vain estimation in which they hold themselves and would have others to hold them, interrupt their stereotyped devotions, and they are disturbed and offended beyond measure.

And if, to bring them back to the true knowledge of themselves and of the way of perfection, Almighty God should send them sickness, or sorrow, or persecution (that touchstone of His servants' loyalty, which never befalls them without His permission or command), then is the unstable foundation of their spiritual edifice discovered, and its interior, all corroded and defaced by pride, laid bare; for they refuse to resign themselves to the will of God, to acquiesce in His always righteous though mysterious judgments, in all events, whether joyful or sorrowful, which may befall them; neither will they, after the example of His Divine Son in His sufferings and humiliation, abase themselves below all creatures, accounting their persecutors as beloved friends, as instruments of God's goodness, and co-operators with Him in the mortification, perfection, and salvation of their souls.

Hence it is most certain that such persons are in serious danger; for, the inward eye being darkened, wherewith they contemplate themselves and these their external good works, they attribute to themselves a very high degree of perfection; and thus puffed up with pride they pass judgment upon others, while a very extraordinary degree of God's assisting grace is needed to convert themselves. For the open sinner is more easily converted and restored to God than the man who shrouds himself under the cloak of seeming virtue.

Thou seest, then, very clearly that, as I have said, the spiritual life consists not in these things. It consists in nothing else but

the knowledge of the goodness and the greatness of God, and of our nothingness and inclination to all evil; in the love of Him and the hatred of ourselves; in subjection, not to Him alone, but, for love of Him, to all His creatures; in entire renunciation of all will of our own, and absolute resignation to all His divine pleasure; and furthermore, in willing and doing all this purely for the glory of God and solely to please Him, and because He so wills and merits thus to be loved and served.

This is the law of love, impressed by the hand of the Lord Himself upon the hearts of His faithful servants; this is the abnegation of self which He requires of us; this is His sweet yoke and light burden; this is the obedience to which, by His voice and His example, our Master and Redeemer calls us. In aspiring to such sublime perfection thou wilt have to do continual violence to thyself by a generous conflict with thine own will in all things, great or small, until it be wholly annihilated: thou must prepare thyself, therefore, for the battle with all readiness of mind; for none but brave warriors shall receive the crown.

This is indeed the hardest of all struggles; for while we strive against self, self is striving against us, and therefore is the victory here most glorious and precious in the sight of God. For if thou wilt set thyself to trample down and exterminate all thy unruly appetites, desires, and wishes, even in the smallest and most inconsiderable matters, thou wilt render a greater and more acceptable service to thy

God than if thou shouldst discipline thyself to blood, fast more rigorously than hermits or anchorites of old, or convert millions of souls, and yet voluntarily leave even one of these evils alive within thee. For although the conversion of souls is no doubt more precious to the Lord than the mortification of a fancy, nevertheless nothing should in thy sight be of greater account than to will and to do that very thing which the Lord specially demands and requires of thee. And He will infallibly be better pleased that thou shouldst watch and labour to mortify thy passions than if, consciously and wilfully leaving but one alive within thee, thou shouldst serve Him in some other matter of greater importance in itself.

Now that thou seest wherein Christian perfection consists, and that it requires a continual sharp warfare against self, thou must provide thyself with four most sure and necessary weapons, in order to secure the palm and gain the victory in this spiritual combat. These are : 1. Distrust of self ; 2. Trust in God ; 3. Spiritual exercises ; and 4. Prayer.

Of all these we will, with the Divine assistance, treat briefly and plainly.

CH. II.—DISTRUST OF SELF.

So necessary is self-distrust in this conflict, that without it thou wilt be unable, I say not to achieve the victory desired, but even to overcome the very least of thy passions. And let this be well impressed upon thy mind ; for our corrupt nature too easily inclines us to a false estimate of ourselves ; so that, being

really nothing, we account ourselves to be something, and presume, without the slightest foundation, upon our own strength.

This is a fault not easily discerned by us, but very displeasing in the sight of God. For He desires and loves to see in us a frank and true recognition of this most certain truth, that all the virtue and grace which is within us is derived from Him alone, who is the fountain of all good, and that nothing good can proceed from us, no, not even a thought which can find acceptance in His sight.

And although this very important self-distrust is itself the work of His divine hand, and is bestowed upon His beloved, now by means of holy inspirations, now by sharp chastisements and violent and almost irresistible temptations, and by other means which we ourselves do not understand ; still it is His will that we on our part should do all in our power to attain it. I therefore set before thee four methods, by the use of which, in dependence always on Divine grace, thou mayest acquire this gift.

The first is, to know and consider thine own vileness and nothingness, and thine inability of thyself to do any good, by which to merit an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

The second, continually to ask it of the Lord in fervent and humble prayer ; for it is His gift. And in order to its attainment we must look upon ourselves not only as destitute thereof, but as of ourselves incapable of acquiring it. Present thyself, therefore, thus continually before the Divine Majesty, with

an assured faith that He is willing of His great goodness to grant thy petition; wait patiently all the time which His Providence appoints, and without doubt thou shalt obtain it.

The third is, to stand in fear of thy own judgment about thyself, of thy strong inclination to sin, of the countless hosts of enemies against whom thou art incapable of making the slightest resistance, of their long practice in open warfare and secret stratagem, of their transformations into angels of light, and of the innumerable arts and snares which they secretly spread for us even in the very way of holiness.

The fourth is, whenever thou art overtaken by any fault, to look more deeply into thyself, and more keenly feel thine absolute and utter weakness: for to this end did God permit thy fall, that, warned by His inspiration and illumined by a clearer light than before, thou mayest come to know thyself, and learn to despise thyself as a thing unutterably vile, and be therefore also willing to be so accounted and despised by others. For without this willingness there can be no holy self-distrust, which is founded on true humility and experimental self-knowledge.

This self-knowledge is clearly needful to all who desire to be united to the supreme Light and uncreated Truth; and the Divine clemency often makes use of the fall of proud and presumptuous men to lead to it; justly suffering them to fall into some faults which they trusted to avoid by their own strength,

that they may learn to know and absolutely distrust themselves.

Our Lord is not, however, wont to use so severe a method, until those more gracious means of which we have before spoken have failed to work the cure designed by His divine mercy. He permits a man to fall more or less deeply in proportion to his pride and self-esteem; so that if there were no presumption (as in the case of the Blessed Virgin Mary), there would be no fall.

Therefore, whensoever thou shalt fall, take refuge at once in humble self-knowledge, and beseech the Lord with urgent entreaties to give thee light truly to know thyself, and entire self-distrust, lest thou shouldst fall again, perhaps into deeper perdition.

CH. III.—OF TRUST IN GOD.

SELF-DISTRUST, necessary as we have shown it to be in this conflict, is not alone sufficient. Unless we would be put to flight, or remain helpless and vanquished in the hands of our enemies, we must add to it perfect trust in God, and expect from Him alone succour and victory. For as we, who are nothing, can look for nothing from ourselves but falls, and therefore should utterly distrust ourselves; so from our Lord may we assuredly expect complete victory in every conflict. To obtain His help, let us therefore arm ourselves with a lively confidence in Him.

And this also may be accomplished in four ways.

1st. By asking it of God.

2dly. By gazing with the eye of faith at the infinite wisdom and omnipotence of God, to which nothing is impossible or difficult, and confiding in His unbounded goodness and unspeakable willingness to give, hour by hour and moment by moment, all things needful for the spiritual life, and perfect victory over ourselves, if we will but throw ourselves with confidence into His arms. For how shall our Divine Shepherd, who followed after His lost sheep for three-and-thirty years with loud and bitter cries through that painful and thorny way, wherein He spilt His heart's blood and laid down His life—how shall He refuse to turn His quickening glance upon the poor sheep which now follows Him in obedience to His commands, or with a desire (though sometimes faint and feeble) to obey Him! When it cries to Him piteously for help, will He not hear, and laying it upon His divine shoulders, call upon His friends and all the angels of heaven to rejoice with Him? For if our Lord ceased not to search most diligently for the blind and deaf sinner, the lost drachma of the gospel, till He found him; can He abandon him who, like a lost sheep, cries and calls piteously upon his Shepherd? And if God knocks continually at the heart of man, desiring to enter in and sup there, and to communicate to it His gifts, who can believe that when that heart opens and invites Him to enter, He will turn a deaf ear to the invitation, and refuse to come in?

3dly. The third way to acquire this holy confidence is, to call to mind that truth so

plainly taught in Holy Scripture, that no one who trusted in God has ever been confounded.

4thly. The fourth, which will serve at once towards the attainment of self-distrust and of trust in God, is this : when any duty presents itself to be done, any struggle with self to be made, any victory over self to be attempted, before proposing or resolving upon it, think first upon thine own weakness ; next turn, full of self-distrust, to the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God ; and in reliance upon these, resolve to labour and to fight generously. Then, with these weapons in thine hands, and with the help of prayer (of which we shall speak in its proper place), set thyself to labour and to strive.

Unless thou observe this order, though thou mayest seem to thyself to be doing all things in reliance upon God, thou wilt too often find thyself mistaken ; for so common is a presumptuous self-confidence, and so subtle are the forms it assumes, that it lurks almost always even under an imagined self-distrust and fancied confidence in God.

To avoid presumption as much as possible, and in order that all thy works may be wrought in distrust of self and trust in God, the consideration of thine own weakness must precede the consideration of God's omnipotence ; and both together must precede all thine actions.

CH. IV.—HOW A MAN MAY KNOW WHETHER HE IS ACTING IN
SELF-DISTRUST AND TRUST IN GOD.

THE presumptuous servant often supposes that he has acquired self-distrust and trust in God when the case is far otherwise.

And this will be made clear to thee by the effect produced on thy mind by a fall. If thou art so saddened and disquieted thereby as to be tempted to despair of making progress or doing good, it is a sure sign that thy trust is in self and not in God. For he who has any large measure of self-distrust and trust in God feels neither surprise, nor despondency, nor bitterness, when he falls : for he knows that this has arisen from his own weakness and want of trust in God. On the contrary, being rendered thereby more distrustful of self, more humbly confident in God, detesting above all things his fault and the unruly passions which have occasioned it, and mourning with a quiet, deep, and patient sorrow over his offence against God, he pursues his enterprise, and follows after his enemies, even to the death, with a spirit more resolute and undaunted than before.

I would that these things were well considered by certain persons so called spiritual, who cannot and will not be at rest when they have fallen into any fault. They rush to their spiritual father, rather to get rid of the anxiety and uneasiness which spring from wounded self-love than for that purpose which should be their chief end in seeking him, to purify themselves from the stain of sin, and to fortify themselves against its power by means of the most holy sacrament of penance.

CH. V.—OF THE ERROR OF MANY, WHO MISTAKE FOSILLAN-
MITY FOR A VIRTUE.

MANY also deceive themselves in this way,—they mistake the fear and uneasiness which follow after sin for virtuous emotions; and know not that these painful feelings spring from wounded pride, and a presumption which rests upon confidence in themselves and their own strength. They have accounted themselves to be something, and relied unduly upon their own powers. Their fall proves to them the vanity of this self-dependence, and they are immediately troubled and astonished as at some strange thing, and are disheartened at seeing the prop to which they trusted suddenly give way.

This can never befall the humble man, who trusts in his God alone, and in nothing presumes upon himself. Though grieved when he falls into a fault, he is neither surprised nor disquieted; for he knows that his own misery and weakness, already clearly manifest to himself by the light of truth, have brought all this upon him.

CH. VI.—FURTHER DIRECTIONS HOW TO ATTAIN TO SELF-
DISTRUST AND TRUST IN GOD.

SINCE our whole power to subdue our enemies arises principally from self-distrust and trust in God, I will give thee some further directions to enable thee, by the Divine assistance, to acquire it.

Know, then, for a certain truth, that neither all gifts, natural or acquired, nor all graces given *gratis*, nor the knowledge of all Scrip-

ture, nor long habitual exercise in the service of God, will enable us to do His will, unless in every good and acceptable work to be performed, in every temptation to be overcome, in every peril to be avoided, in every cross to be borne in conformity to His will, our heart be sustained and upborne by an especial aid from Him, and His hand be outstretched to help us. We must, then, bear this in mind all our life long, every day, every hour, every moment, that we may never indulge so much as a thought of self-confidence.

And as to confidence in God, know that it is as easy to Him to conquer many enemies as few; the old and experienced as the weak and young.

Therefore we will suppose a soul to be heavy-laden with sins, to have every possible fault and every imaginable defect, and to have tried, by every possible means and every kind of spiritual exercise, to forsake sin and to practise holiness. We will suppose this soul to have done all this, and yet to have failed in making the smallest advance in holiness, nay, on the contrary, to have been borne the more strongly towards evil.

For all this she must not lose her trust in God, nor give over her spiritual conflict and lay down her arms, but still fight on resolutely, knowing that none is vanquished in this spiritual combat but he who ceases to struggle and loses confidence in God, whose succour never fails His soldiers, though He sometimes permits them to be wounded. Fight on, then, valiantly; for on this depends the whole issue

of the strife: for there is a ready and effectual remedy for the wounds of all combatants who look confidently to God and to His aid for help; and when they least expect it they shall see their enemies dead at their feet.

CH. VII.—OF SPIRITUAL EXERCISES; AND FIRST OF THE EXERCISE OF THE UNDERSTANDING, WHICH MUST BE KEPT GUARDED AGAINST IGNORANCE AND CURIOSITY.

IF in this warfare we are provided with no weapons except self-distrust and trust in God, needful as both these are, we shall not only fail to gain the victory over ourselves, but shall fall into many evils. To these, therefore, we must add the use of spiritual exercises, the third weapon named above.

And these relate chiefly to the understanding and the will.

As regards the understanding, we must guard against two things which are apt to obscure it.

One is ignorance, which darkens it and impedes it in acquiring the knowledge of truth, the proper object of the understanding. Therefore it must be made clear and bright by exercise, that so it may be able to see and discern plainly all that is needful to purify the soul from disorderly passions, and to adorn it with saintly virtues.

This light may be obtained in two ways. The first and most important is prayer, imploring the Holy Ghost to pour it into our hearts. This He will not fail to do, if we in truth seek God alone and the fulfilment of His holy will, and if in all things we submit our judgment to that of our spiritual father.

The other is, to exercise ourselves continually in a true and deep consideration of all things, to discover whether they be good or evil, according to the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and not according to their outward appearance, as they impress the senses or are judged of by the world.

This consideration, if rightly exercised, will teach us to regard as falsehood and vanity all which the blind and corrupt world in so many various ways loves, desires, and seeks after. It will show us plainly that the honours and pleasures of earth are but vanity and vexation of spirit; that injury and infamy inflicted on us by the world bring true glory, and tribulations contentment; that to pardon our enemies and to do them good is true magnanimity, and an act which likens us most nearly to God; that to despise the world is better than to rule it; that voluntary obedience for the love of God to the meanest of His creatures is greater and nobler than to command mighty princes; and that the mortification and subjugation of our most trifling appetite is more glorious than the reduction of strong cities, the defeat of mighty armies, the working of miracles, or the raising of the dead.

CH. VIII.—OF THE HINDRANCES TO A RIGHT DISCERNMENT OF THINGS, AND OF THE METHOD TO BE ADOPTED IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THEM ARIGHT.

THE cause of our not rightly discerning all these things and many others is, that we conceive a love or hatred of them at first sight. Our understanding is thus darkened, so that it cannot judge of them aright.

Lest thou fall into this delusion, take all possible care to keep thy will pure and free from inordinate affection for any thing whatsoever.

When any object, then, is presented to thee, view it with thine understanding ; and consider it maturely before thou be moved by hatred to reject it, if it be a thing contrary to thine inclinations, or by love to desire it, if it be pleasing to them.

For thus the understanding, being unclouded by passion, will be free and clear, and able to perceive the truth, and to discern the evil which lurks behind delusive pleasure, and the good which is veiled under the appearance of evil.

But if the will be first inclined to love or hate any thing, the understanding will be unable to exercise a right judgment upon it. For the affection which has thus intruded itself so obscures the understanding, that it views the object as other than it is, and by thus representing it to the will, influences that faculty, in contradiction to every law and rule of reason, to love or hate it inordinately. The understanding is gradually darkened more and more, and in this deepening obscurity the object appears more and more hateful or lovely to the will.

Hence, if this most important rule be not observed, these two faculties, the understanding and the will, noble and excellent as they are, will soon sink in a miserable descent from darkness into thicker darkness, and from error into deeper error.

Guard thyself most vigilantly, then, from all

inordinate affection for any thing whatever, until thou hast first tested it by the light of the understanding, and chiefly by that of grace and prayer, and by the judgment of thy spiritual father.

And this is to be observed most carefully with regard to such outward works as are good and holy, because the danger is greatest here of delusion and indiscretion.

Hence thou mayest here receive serious injury from some circumstance of time, or place, or degree, or regarding obedience; as has been proved by many, who have incurred great danger in the performance of commendable and holy exercises.

CH. IX.—OF ANOTHER DANGER FROM WHICH THE UNDERSTANDING MUST BE GUARDED IN ORDER THAT IT MAY EXERCISE A TRUE DISCERNMENT.

THE second thing from which the understanding must be guarded is curiosity: for by filling it with hurtful, vain, and impertinent thoughts, we incapacitate and disable it from apprehending that which most nearly affects our true mortification and perfection.

To this end, thou must be as one dead to all needless investigation of even lawful earthly things.

Always restrain thine intellect as much as possible, and love to keep it low.

Let the news and the changes of the world, whether great or small, be to thee as though they were not; and should they intrude themselves, reject and drive them from thee.

Be sober and humble even in the desire to

understand heavenly things, wishing to know nothing but Christ crucified, His life, His death, and what He requires of thee. Cast all other things far from thee, and so shalt thou be very pleasing unto God. For He loves and delights in those who desire and seek of Him such things alone as serve to the love of His divine goodness and the fulfilment of His will. All other petitions and inquiries belong to self-love, pride, and the snares of the devil.

By following these instructions thou wilt avoid many dangers ; for when the wily serpent sees the will of those who are aiming at the spiritual life to be strong and resolute, he attacks their understanding, that so he may master both the one and the other.

He often, therefore, infuses lofty and curious speculations into their minds, especially if they be of an acute and intellectual order, and easily inflated with pride ; and he does this in order that they may busy themselves in the enjoyment and discussion of such subjects, wherein, as they falsely persuade themselves, they enjoy God, and meanwhile neglect to purify their hearts and to apply themselves to self-knowledge and true mortification. So, falling into the snare of pride, they make an idol of their own understanding.

Hence, being already accustomed to have recourse in all circumstances to their own judgment, they come gradually and imperceptibly to believe that they have no need of advice or control from others.

This is a most perilous case, and very hard to cure, the pride of the understanding being

more dangerous than that of the will ; for when the pride of the will is once perceived by the understanding, it may in course of time be easily remedied by submission to those to whom it owes obedience. But how, or by whom, can he be cured, who obstinately believes his own opinion to be worth more than that of others ? How shall he submit to other men's judgment, which he accounts to be far inferior to his own ?

The understanding is the eye of the soul, by which the wound of the proud will should be discovered and cleansed ; if that eye, then, itself be weak and blind and swollen with pride, by whom shall it be healed ?

And if the light become darkness, and the rule faulty, what will become of the rest ?

Therefore resist this dangerous pride sometimes, before it penetrate into the marrow of thy bones.

Blunt the acuteness of thine intellect, willingly submit thine own opinion to that of others, become a fool for the love of God, and thou shalt be wiser than Solomon.

CH. X.—OF THE EXERCISE OF THE WILL, AND OF THE END TO WHICH ALL OUR ACTIONS, WHETHER INTERIOR OR EXTERIOR, SHOULD TEND

BESIDES this necessary exercise of the understanding, thou must so regulate thy will that it may not be left to follow its own desires, but may be in all things conformed to the Divine pleasure.

And remember, that it is not enough only to strive after those things which are most

pleasing to God ; but thou must so will them, and so do them, as moved thereto by Him, and with a view to please Him alone.

In this exercise of the will, even more than in that of the understanding, we shall meet with strong opposition from nature, which seeks itself and its own ease and pleasure in all things ; but especially in such as are holy and spiritual. It delights itself in these, feeding greedily upon them as upon wholesome food.

As soon, therefore, as they are presented to us we look wistfully upon them, and desire them, not because such is the will of God, nor with the sole view to please Him, but for the sake of the satisfaction and benefit to be derived from willing those things which God wills.

This delusion is the more subtle from the very excellence of the thing desired. Hence, even in the desire after God Himself, we are exposed to the delusions of self-love, which often leads us to look more to our own interests, and to the benefits we expect from God, than to His will, which is, that we should love and desire and obey Him for His own glory alone.

I will now show thee a way to avoid this snare, which would impede thee in the path of perfection, and to accustom thyself to will and to do all things as moved by the Spirit of God, and with the pure intention of honouring and pleasing Him alone, who desires to be the one End and Principle of our every word and action. When any thing presents

itself to thee as if willed by God, do not permit thyself to will it till thou hast first raised thy thoughts to Him to discover whether He willeth thee to will it, and because He so wills it, and to please Him alone.

Let thy will, then, being thus moved and attracted by His, be impelled to will it because He wills it, and solely to please and honour Him.

In like manner, if thou wouldst refuse things which are contrary to God's will, refuse them not till thou hast first fixed the eye of thy mind upon His divine will, who wills that thou shouldst refuse them solely to please Him.

Know, however, that the frauds and deceits of wily nature are but little suspected; for, ever secretly seeking self, it often leads us to fancy that our end and motive is to please God when in reality it is far otherwise.

Thus, when we choose or refuse any thing for our own interest and satisfaction, we often imagine that we are choosing or refusing it in the hope of pleasing, or in the fear of displeasing, God.

The true and effectual remedy for this delusion is purity of heart, which consists in this—which is indeed the aim and object of all this spiritual warfare—the putting off the old man, and the putting on the new.

And to this end, seeing thou art full of self, take care in the beginning of every action to free thyself as much as possible from all admixture of any thing which seems to be thine own. Choose nothing, do nothing, refuse nothing, unless thou first feel thyself moved and

drawn thereto by the pure and simple will of God.

If thou dost not always feel thus actuated in the inward workings of the mind, and in outward actions, which are but transient, thou must be content to have this motive ever virtually present, always maintaining a pure intention to please thy God alone in all things. But in actions of longer duration it is well not only to excite this motive within thyself at the beginning, but also to renew it frequently, and to keep it alive till the end. Otherwise thou wilt be in danger of falling into another snare of our natural self-love, which, as it is always inclined to yield rather to self than to God, often causes us unconsciously, in the course of time, to change our objects and our aims.

The servant of God who is not on his guard against this danger, often begins a work with the single thought of pleasing his Lord alone; but soon, gradually and almost imperceptibly, he begins to take such pleasure in his work, that he loses sight of the Divine Will and follows his own. He dwells so much on the satisfaction he feels in what he is doing, and on the honour and benefit to be derived therefrom, that should God Himself place any impediment in the way, either by sickness or accident, or through the agency of man, he is immediately troubled and disquieted, and often falls to murmuring against the impediment, whatever it may be, or rather, against God Himself. A clear proof that his intention was not wholly from God, but sprang from an evil root and a corrupted source.

For he who acts only as moved by God, and with a view to please Him alone, desires not one thing above another. He wishes only to have what it pleases God he should have, and at the time and in the way which may be most agreeable to Him; and whether he have it or not, he is equally tranquil and content; because in either case he obtains his wish, and fulfils his intention, which is nothing else but simply to please God.

Therefore recollect thyself seriously, and be careful always to direct every action to this perfect end.

And although the bent of thy natural disposition should move thee to do good through fear of the pains of hell or hope of the joys of paradise, thou mayest even here set before thee, as thine ultimate end, the will and pleasure of God, who is pleased that thou shouldst enter into His kingdom and not into hell. It is not in man fully to apprehend the force and virtue of this motive; for the most insignificant action, done with a view to please God alone, and for His sole glory, is (if we may so speak) of infinitely greater value than many others of the greatest dignity and importance done without this motive. Hence a single penny given to a poor man with the sole desire to please His Divine Majesty, is more acceptable to God than the entire renunciation of all earthly goods for any other end, even for the attainment of the bliss of heaven; an end in itself not only good, but supremely to be desired.

This exercise of doing all things with the

single aim to please God alone seems hard at first, but will become plain and easy by practice, if, with the warmest affections of the heart, we desire God alone, and long for Him as our only and most perfect good; who deserves that all creatures should seek Him for Himself, and serve Him and love Him above all things.

The deeper and more continual our meditations are upon His infinite excellence, the more fervent and the more frequent will be these exercises of the will; and we shall thus acquire more easily and more speedily the habit of performing every action from pure love to that gracious Lord, who alone is worthy of our reverence and love.

Lastly, in order to the attainment of this divine motive, I advise thee to seek it of God by importunate prayer, and to meditate frequently upon the innumerable benefits which He, of His pure and disinterested love, has bestowed upon us.

CH. XI.—OF SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY INCLINE THE
WILL TO SEEK TO PLEASE GOD IN ALL THINGS.

FURTHERMORE, to incline the will more readily to seek God's honour and glory in all things, always remember that, in many and various ways, He hath first loved and honoured thee.

In creation, by creating thee out of nothing after His likeness, and all other creatures for thy service.

In redemption, by sending, not an angel, but His only-begotten Son, to redeem thee, not with the corruptible price of silver and gold,

but with His Precious Blood, and by His most painful and ignominious death. Remember, that every hour, nay, every moment, He protects thee from thine enemies, fights for thee by His grace, offers thee continually, in the Sacrament of the Altar, His well-beloved Son, to be thy food and thy defence: are not all these tokens of the inestimable regard and love borne to thee by the Infinite God? It is not in man to conceive, on the one hand, how great is the value which so great a Lord sets upon us poor creatures in our loneliness and misery; and, on the other, how great the return we are bound to make to His Supreme Majesty, who has done so many and such great things for us.

For if earthly lords, when honoured even by poor and lowly men, feel bound to honour them in return, how should our vile nature demean itself towards the Supreme King of heaven and earth, by whom we are so dearly loved and so highly prized!

And besides all this, and before all things, keep ever vividly in mind that the Divine Majesty is infinitely worthy to be loved for Himself alone, and to be served purely for His own good pleasure.

CH. XII.—OF THE DIVERS WILLS IN MAN, AND THE WARFARE BETWEEN THEM.

ALTHOUGH in this combat we may be said to have within us two wills, the one of the reason, which is thence called rational and superior, the other of the senses, thence called sensual and inferior, and commonly described

by the words appetite, flesh, sense, and passion ; yet, as it is the reason which constitutes us men, we cannot be said to will any thing which is willed by the senses unless we be also inclined thereto by the superior will. And herein does our spiritual conflict principally consist. The reasonable will being placed, as it were, midway between the Divine will, which is above it—and the inferior will, or will of the senses, which is beneath it, is continually assaulted by both ; each seeking in turn to attract and subdue, and bring it into obedience.

Much hard toil and trouble must, however, be undergone by the unpractised, especially at the outset, when they resolve to amend their evil lives, and, renouncing the world and the flesh, to give themselves up to the love and service of Jesus Christ. For the opposition encountered by the superior will, from the continual warfare between the Divine and sensual will, is sharp and severe, and accompanied by acute suffering.

It is not so with those who are well practised in the way of virtue or of vice ; they pursue without difficulty the path on which they have entered ; the virtuous yielding readily to the Divine will, and the vicious yielding without resistance to the will of the senses.

But let no one imagine it possible to persevere in the exercise of true Christian virtues, or to serve God as He ought to be served, unless he will in good earnest do violence to himself, and endure the pain of parting with all pleasant things whatsoever, whether great

or small, around which his earthly affections are entwined

Hence it is that so few attain to perfection ; for after having with much toil overcome the greater vices, they will not persevere in doing violence to themselves by struggling against the promptings of self-will, and an infinity of lesser desires. They grow weary of so unremitting a struggle ; they suffer these insignificant enemies to prevail against them, and so to acquire an absolute mastery over their hearts.

To this class belong men who, if they do not take what belongs to others, cleave with inordinate affection to that which is lawfully their own. If they do not obtain honours by unlawful means, yet they do not, as they should, shun them ; but, on the contrary, cease not to desire, and sometimes even to seek, them in various ways. If they observe fasts of obligation, yet they do not mortify their palate in the matter of superfluous eating, or the indulgence in delicate morsels. If they live continually, yet they do not renounce many indulgences which much impede union with God and the growth of the spiritual life ; and which, as they are very dangerous even to the holiest persons, and most dangerous to those who fear them least, should be as much as possible avoided by all.

Hence all their good works are performed in a lukewarm spirit, and accompanied by much self-seeking, by many lurking imperfections, by a certain kind of self-esteem, and by a desire to be praised and valued by the world.

Such persons not only fail to make any pro-

gress in the way of salvation, but rather go back; and are thus in danger of relapsing into their former sins, because they have no love of true holiness, and show little gratitude to their Lord, who rescued them from the tyranny of the devil. They are moreover too blind and ignorant to see the peril in which they stand; and so falsely persuade themselves of their own security.

And here we discover a delusion, which is the more dangerous because it is little apprehended. Many who aspire to the spiritual life, unconsciously love themselves far more than they ought to do; and therefore practise for the most part those exercises which suit their taste, and neglect others, which touch to the quick those natural inclinations and sensual appetites against which they ought in all reason to direct the full strength of the battle.

Therefore I exhort and counsel thee to be in love with pain and difficulty; for they will bring with them that which is the end and object of the whole struggle—victory over self. The more deeply thou shalt be in love with the difficulties encountered by beginners in virtue and in war, the surer and the speedier shall be the victory; and if thy love be to the difficulty and the toilsome struggle, rather than to the victory and the virtue to be attained, thou shalt the more speedily obtain all thy desire.

OM. XIII.—OF THE WAY TO RESIST THE IMPULSES OF SENSE, AND OF THE ACTS TO BE PERFORMED BY THE WILL IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE HABITS OF VIRTUE.

WHENEVER thy reasonable will is attacked by the will of sense on the one hand, and the Divine will on the other, each seeking to obtain the mastery over it, thou must make use of various exercises, in order that the Divine will may always govern thee.

First—Whenever thou art assailed and buffeted by the impulses of sense, oppose a valiant resistance to them, so that the superior will may not consent.

Secondly—When the assaults have ceased, excite them anew, in order to repress them with greater force and vigour. Then challenge them again to a third conflict, wherein thou mayest accustom thyself to repulse them with contempt and abhorrence.

These two challenges to battle should be made to every disorderly appetite, except in the case of temptations of the flesh, concerning which we shall speak in their place.

Lastly—Make acts contrary to each evil passion which is to be resisted.

This will be made clear by the following example.

Suppose thou art assailed by feelings of impatience. Look carefully into thyself, and thou wilt find that these feelings are constantly directed against the superior will, in order to win its consent.

Now, then, betake thee to the first exercise; and by repeated acts of the will, do all in thy power to stifle each feeling as it arises, that

thy will may not consent to it. And never desist from this till, wearied unto death, thine enemy yield himself vanquished.

But see here the malice of the devil. When he perceives that we resist the first movements of any passion, not only does he desist from exciting them, but when excited, he endeavours for the time to allay them, lest, by the exercise of resistance to the passion, we should acquire the habit of the opposite virtue. He would fain also betray us into the snares of pride and vain-glory, by subtly insinuating to us that, like valiant soldiers, we have quickly trampled down our enemies.

Proceed, therefore, to the second conflict, recalling and exciting within thyself those thoughts which tempted thee to impatience, until they sensibly affect thee. Then set thyself to repress every such feeling with a stronger will and more earnest endeavour than before.

And because, however strenuously we have resisted our enemies, from a sense of duty and a desire to please God, we are still in danger, unless we hold them in perfect detestation, of being one day overcome, attack them again even a third time; and repel them, not with repugnance only, but with indignation, until they have become hateful and abominable in thy sight.

Lastly, to adorn and perfect thy soul in the habit of all the virtues, exercise thyself in the inward acts directly opposed to all thy disorderly passions.

Wouldst thou attain, for instance, to the

perfection of patience ! On receiving any insult which tempts thee to impatience, it will not be enough to exercise thyself in the three modes of warfare above described, thou must do more—even willingly accept and love the indignity thou hast endured ; desiring to submit to it again, from the same person, and in the same manner ; expecting and disposing thyself to bear still harder things.

These contrary acts are needful to our perfection in all the virtues, because the exercises of which we have been speaking—manifold and efficacious as they are—will not suffice to eradicate the roots of sin.

Hence (to pursue the same example) although, when we receive an insult, we do not yield to the impulse of impatience, but, on the contrary, resist it by the three methods above described, yet, unless we accustom ourselves by many and repeated acts of the will to love contempt, and rejoice to be despised, we shall never overcome the sin of impatience, which springs from a regard for our own reputation and a shrinking from contempt.

And if the vicious root be left alive, it is ever springing up afresh ; causing virtue to languish, and sometimes to perish utterly, and keeping us in continual danger of relapse upon the first opportunity which may present itself. Without these contrary acts, therefore, we shall never acquire a true habit of virtue.

And bear in mind also, that these acts should be so frequent and so numerous, as utterly to destroy the vicious habit, which, as it had obtained possession of our heart by repeated acts

of sin, so by contrary acts must it be dislodged, to make way for the habit of virtue.

Again, a greater number of virtuous acts is requisite to form the habit of virtue than of evil ones to form the habit of vice; because the former are not, like the latter, assisted by our corrupt nature.

I would add to all that has been said, that if the virtue in which thou art exercising thyself so require, thou must also practise exterior acts conformable to the interior; as, for instance, words of love and meekness, and lowly services rendered to those who have in any way thwarted or slighted thee.

And though all these acts, whether interior or exterior, should be, or should seem to thee to be, feebly and faintly done, and, as it were, against thy will, yet thou must not on any account neglect them; for feeble as they may be, they will keep thee safe and stedfast in the fight, and smooth before thee the path to victory.

And stand always prepared and on thy guard to resist the assaults of every passion, not only such as are violent and imperious, but the slightest and the gentlest; for these but open the way to the greater, by which habits of vice are gradually formed within us.

It has often happened, in consequence of the little care taken by some men to eradicate these lesser desires from their hearts, after they have overcome the more violent assaults of the same passion, that, when they have least expected it, their old enemies have fallen upon them again, and they have sustained a more

complete and fatal defeat than had ever befallen them before.

Remember, again, to mortify and thwart thine own wishes from time to time in lawful but not necessary things; for many benefits follow such discipline; it will prepare and dispose thee more and more for self-mastery in other things: thou wilt thus become expert and strong in the struggle with temptation; thou wilt escape many a snare of the devil, and accomplish a work well pleasing to the Lord.

I speak plainly to thee: if, in the way I have taught thee, thou wilt persevere faithfully in these holy exercises for self-reformation and self-mastery, I promise thee that in a short time thou wilt make great progress, and wilt become spiritual, not in name only, but in truth. But in no other manner do I bid thee hope to attain to true holiness and spirituality, nor by any other exercises, however excellent in thine estimation, though thou shouldst seem to be wholly absorbed in them, and to hold sweet colloquies with our Lord.

For, as I told thee in the first chapter, true holiness and spirituality consists not in exercises which are pleasing to us and conformable to our nature, nor is it produced by these; but by such only as nail that nature, with all its works, to the cross, and, renewing the whole man by the practice of the evangelical virtues, unite him to his crucified Saviour and Creator.

There can be no question that, as habits of

vice are formed by many and frequent acts of the superior will yielding itself to the sway of the sensual appetites, so, on the contrary, habits of evangelical virtue are acquired by the performance of frequent and repeated acts of conformity to the Divine Will, which calls upon us to exercise ourselves now in one virtue, now in another.

For as our will, however fiercely assailed by sin or by the suggestions of our lower nature, can never become sinful or earthly unless it yield or incline itself to the temptation, so thou wilt never attain to holiness and union with God, however powerfully called and mightily assailed by Divine grace and heavenly inspirations, unless by inward, and, if need be, by outward acts, thy will be made conformable to His.

CH. XIV.—WHAT MUST BE DONE WHEN THE SUPERIOR WILL SEEMS TO BE WHOLLY STIFLED AND OVERCOME BY THE INFERIOR WILL AND BY OTHER ENEMIES.

If at times the superior will should seem to thee powerless to resist the inferior and its other enemies, because thou feelest not within thee an effectual will opposed to them, yet stand firm, and do not quit the field; for thou must always account thyself victorious until thou canst clearly perceive that thou hast yielded.

For inasmuch as our superior will has no need of the inferior for the production of its acts, without its own consent it can never be compelled to yield, however sorely assaulted.

For God endued our will with such freedom

and such strength, that were all the senses, all evil spirits, nay, the whole world itself, to arm and conspire to assault and oppress it with all their might, it could still, in spite of them, will or not will all that it wills or wills not; and that how often soever, whensoever, howsoever, and to what end soever it should please.

And if at any time thy foes should so violently assail and press upon thee as almost to stifle thy will, so that it seems to have no breath to produce any opposing act of volition, yet do not lose courage, nor throw down thine arms, but make use of thy tongue in thy defence, saying, "I yield not, I consent not;" like a man whose adversary is upon him and holds him down, and who, being unable to reach him with the point of his sword, strikes at him with the hilt; and as he tries to make a spring backwards to wound his enemy with the point, so do thou take refuge in the knowledge of thyself, the knowledge that thou art nothing, and canst do nothing, and with faith in God, who can do all things, strike a blow at this hostile passion, saying: "Help me, Lord! help me, O my God! help me, Jesus, Mary! that I may not yield to this enemy."

Thou mayest also, when thine enemy gives thee time, call in thy reason to assist the weakness of thy will, by meditating upon various points, the consideration of which may give it strength and restore its breath to resist the enemy. For example:

Thou art, perhaps, under some persecution or other trial, so sorely tempted to impatience,

that thy will, as it seems to thee, cannot, or at least will not, endure it. Encourage it, then, by discussing with the reason such points as the following :

Consider, first, whether thou hast given any occasion for the evil under which thou art suffering, and so hast deserved it ; for if thou hast done so, every rule of justice requires of thee to bear patiently the wound which with thine own hand thou hast inflicted on thyself.

2dly. If blameless in this particular instance, bethink thee of thy other sins, for which God has not yet chastised thee, and for which thou hast not, as thou shouldst have done, duly punished thyself. Seeing, then, that God's mercy changes thy deserved punishment, which should be eternal, into some light affliction which is but temporal, thou shouldst receive it, not willingly only, but thankfully.

3dly. Should thine offences against the Divine Majesty seem to thee to be light, and the penance thou hast endured for them heavy (a persuasion, however, which thou shouldst never allow thyself to entertain), thou must remember that it is only through the strait gate of tribulation that thou canst enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4thly. That even were it possible to enter there by any other way, the law of love forbids thee so much as to think of it, seeing that the Son of God, with all His friends and all His members, entered into that kingdom by a path strewed with thorns and crosses.

5thly. That which thou hast chiefly to consider. on this and all other occasions, is the

will of thy God, who, for the love He bears thee, views with unspeakable complacency every act of virtue and mortification which, as His faithful and valiant soldier, thou performest in requital of His love to thee. And of this be assured, that the more unreasonable in itself the trial seems, and the more ignominious, by reason of the unworthiness of those from whom it comes, and so the more vexatious and the harder to be borne, so much the more pleasing wilt thou be to thy Lord, if in things so disordered in themselves, and therefore so bitter and repugnant to thee, thou canst approve and love His Divine Will and Providence, in which all events, however adverse, are disposed after a most perfect rule and order.

CH. XV.—SOME ADVICE TOUCHING THE MANNER OF THIS WARFARE, AND ESPECIALLY AGAINST WHOM, AND WITH WHAT RESOLUTION, IT MUST BE CARRIED ON.

THOU seest now after what manner thou must fight in order to conquer self, and to adorn thy soul with all virtues.

Know, furthermore, that to obtain a speedier and easier victory over thine enemies, it is expedient, nay necessary, that thou shouldst fight against them daily, and especially against self-love, and learn to esteem as dear friends and benefactors all the insults and vexations which the world can heap upon thee.

And it is because men know not the necessity of this daily warfare, and make too little account of it, that, as I said before, their victories are rare, difficult, imperfect, and unstable.

Moreover, I warn thee that thou must bring great stedfastness of soul to this conflict. And this gift thou wilt readily obtain if thou beseech it of God : considering, on the one hand, the undying hatred and fury of thine enemies, and the vast multitude of their ranks and squadrons ; and, on the other, how infinitely greater is the goodness of God and the love wherewith He loves thee, and how much mightier, too, are the angels of heaven, and the prayers of the saints, which fight for us.

By this consideration have so many feeble women been enabled to overcome and conquer all the power and wisdom of the world, all the assaults of the flesh, and all the fury of hell.

Therefore thou must never be dismayed, though at times thine enemy seem to be strengthening his array against thee, though the struggle threaten to last thy whole lifetime, and though almost certain falls menace thee on every side ; for know assuredly, that the whole strength and wisdom of our enemies is in the hands of our Divine Captain, in whose honour the battle is arrayed ; who, prizing us beyond measure, and having Himself imperatively called us to the conflict, will never suffer thee to be overcome. Nay more, He will Himself fight on thy right hand, and will not fail in His own good time to subdue thy foes before thee ; and this to thy greater reward, if He should delay to give thee the victory till the last day of thy life.

This alone is thy concern, to fight manfully, and never, however numerous thy wounds, to lay down thine arms or take to flight.

Lastly. That thou fail not to fight courageously bear in mind that this is a conflict whence there is no escape ; and that he who will not fight must needs be captured or slain.

Moreover, we have to do with enemies so powerful, and so filled with deadly hate, as to leave us no hope of either peace or truce.

CH. XVI.—IN WHAT MANNER THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST SHOULD TAKE THE FIELD EARLY IN THE MORNING.

ON awaking in the morning, the first thing to be observed by thine inward sight is the listed field in which thou art enclosed, the law of the combat being that he who fights not must there lie dead for ever. Here picture to thyself, on one side, thine enemy (that evil inclination which thou art already pledged to conquer) now standing before thee, ready armed to wound and slay thee : see also, on the right hand, thy victorious Captain Jesus Christ, with His most holy Mother the Virgin Mary, and her beloved spouse St. Joseph, and innumerable hosts of angels, especially St. Michael the archangel ; and, on the left hand, the infernal demon, with all his armies, ready to excite this passion and to persuade thee to yield to it. Then shalt thou seem to hear a voice as of thy guardian angel thus addressing thee :

“Thou art to fight this day against this and other enemies of thine. Let not thine heart fail, nor thy spirit faint. Yield not on any account,—neither for fear nor any other cause ; for our Lord, thy Leader, stands beside thee with all His glorious hosts, and will do battle for thee against all thine enemies,

and will not suffer their forces to prevail against thee or to overcome thee.

"Only stand firm; do violence to thyself, and endure the pain such violence will cause thee. Cry unceasingly from the depths of thy heart, and call upon the Lord, and so assuredly shalt thou gain the victory. If thou art weak and inexperienced, if thine enemies are strong and manifold,—manifold more are the succours of Him who created and redeemed thee, and mightier beyond all measure and comparison is thy God, and more willing to save thee than are all thine enemies to destroy thee.

"Fight valiantly then, and be not loth to suffer; for it is this toilsome resistance to thine evil inclinations, this painful struggle against evil habits, which shall gain thee the victory, and win for thee a treasure wherewith to purchase the kingdom of heaven, and unite thy soul to God for ever."

Begin the combat in the name of the Lord, with the weapons of self-distrust and trust in God, of prayer and spiritual exercises; and challenge to the battle thy foe, that is, that inclination, whatever it be, which, according to the order above laid down, thou hast resolved to conquer. Do this, now by open resistance, now by deep abhorrence, or, again, by acts of the contrary virtue, wounding him again and again, even unto death, to give pleasure to thy Lord, who is looking on, with the whole Church triumphant, to behold thy conflict.

I tell thee again, thou must not weary of the struggle, but remember the obligation

which lies on us all to serve and please God, and the absolute necessity of fighting in this battle, from which none can escape without wounds or death. I tell thee, moreover, that if as a rebel thou wouldst fly from God, and give thyself over to the world and the delights of the flesh, thou wilt still be forced, in spite of thyself, to labour in the sweat of thy brow against many and many an adversary, who will pierce thy heart with deadly anguish.

Consider, then, what folly it would be to incur all this toil and trouble, which does but lead to greater toil, and endless trouble and spiritual death, in order to avoid that which will soon be over, and which will lead us to eternal and infinite blessedness in the everlasting enjoyment of our God.

CH. XVII.—OF THE ORDER TO BE OBSERVED IN THE CONFLICT
WITH OUR EVIL PASSIONS.

It is of great importance that we should know how to observe a due order in this combat, lest, as too many do to their own great injury, we should fight in a casual or desultory manner. The order to be observed in the warfare against thine enemies and evil inclinations should be as follows :

Look well into thine heart, and search diligently till thou hast discovered by what thoughts and affections it is surrounded, and by what passion it is most tyrannously swayed ; and against this first take up arms and direct thine attack. If meanwhile thou shouldst be assaulted by other enemies, turn against the one nearest to thee, and which at the moment

threatens thee ; but fail not to return afterwards to the prosecution of thy principal enterprise.

CH. XVIII.—OF THE WAY TO RESIST SUDDEN IMPULSES OF THE PASSIONS.

UNTIL we have become habituated to ward off sudden strokes, whether of insult or other adverse circumstances, it is well, in order to acquire such a habit, to anticipate them, and desire to suffer them over and over again, and so to await them with a mind prepared.

The way to anticipate them is, to consider the passion to which thou art most inclined, and also the places wherein and the persons with whom thou art wont to converse ; whence thou mayest readily conjecture what is likely to befall thee. And shouldst thou meet with any other untoward circumstance which thou hadst not foreseen, although thou wilt find thy soul strengthened by having been prepared to meet the other evils which thou didst foresee, yet mayest thou also avail thyself of the following additional help.

At the very first touch of the insult or trial, whatever it be, rouse thyself at once, and lift up thy heart to God, reflecting on His ineffable goodness and love, which sends thee this affliction, that, by enduring it for the love of Him, thou mayest thereby be more purified, and brought nearer and united unto Him.

And, knowing how greatly He is pleased that thou shouldst suffer it, turn next to thyself, and with a sharp rebuke say, "O, why wilt thou refuse to bear this cross, which is

sent thee not by man, but by thy Father who is in heaven?" Then turn to the cross, and embrace it with all possible patience and joy, saying, "O cross, formed by Divine providence before I was born; O cross, endeared to me by the dear love of my crucified Lord,—nail me now to thee, that so I may give myself to Him who died on thee for my redemption!"

And if at first the passion should prevail against thee, and thou shouldst be wounded, and unable to raise thy heart to God, strive even then to do as at the beginning, and fight as if still unwounded.

The most effectual remedy, however, against these sudden impulses is to remove betimes the cause whence they proceed. Thus, if thou discover that, through thine affection for any object, thou art thrown into a sudden agitation of mind as often as it is presented to thee, the remedy is by persevering efforts to withdraw thine affection from it.

But if the agitation proceed from a person who is so disagreeable to thee that every little action of his annoys and irritates thee, the remedy here is to force thyself to love and cherish him, not only as a creature formed by the same sovereign Hand with thyself, and created anew by the same Divine blood, but also because he offers thee an opportunity, if thou wilt accept it, of becoming like unto thy Lord, who is kind and loving unto all men.

CH. XIX.—OF THE WAY TO RESIST THE SINS OF THE FLESH.

THESE sins must be resisted in a way peculiar

to themselves, and different from the method used against any other temptation.

In order, therefore, to a successful resistance, three periods must be observed.

I. Before the temptation.

II. During the temptation.

III. After the temptation.

I. Before the temptation the struggle must be against those things which are wont to occasion it.

First, thou must combat the vice, but never confront it; on the contrary, avoid to the utmost of thy power every occasion and every person whence thou mayest incur the slightest danger. And if at times compelled to converse with such, let it be briefly, with a grave and modest demeanour, and with words of severity rather than of excessive tenderness and affability.

Neither be confident in thyself if thou art free, and during many years of such exercises hast continued free from temptations of the flesh; for this accursed vice makes its advances secretly, often doing in an hour what in many years it had failed to effect; and it hurts the more grievously, and wounds the more fatally, the more friendly the form it assumes, and the less ground of suspicion it seems to give.

And there is often great danger, as experience has shown and still shows, in intercourse which is indulged in under fair and lawful pretexts, such as kindred, relations of duty, or, again, great virtue in the person beloved. For the poisonous pleasure of sense insinuates itself into this over-frequent and imprudent in-

tercourse, instilling its venom gradually, until it penetrates into the marrow of the soul and darkens the reason more and more, till at last no account is made of things which are really dangerous, such as mutual glances of tenderness, loving words, and the enjoyment of conversation: and so, a change creeping over both, they fall at last into destruction, or into some temptation most hard and toilsome to overcome.

Once more I say to thee, Fly! for thou art as stubble. Trust not to being bathed and filled with the water of a good and strong purpose, and resolved and ready to die rather than offend God; for, inflamed by frequent stirring, the heat of the fire will gradually dry up the water of thy good resolve, and when thou art least on thy guard, it will so enkindle thee that thou wilt respect neither friends nor kindred, nor fear God, nor regard life or honour, nor all the pains of hell. Therefore fly,—fly unless thou wouldst be overtaken, captured, and slain.

Secondly, avoid idleness, and be awake and vigilant, and busied with the thoughts and deeds which befit thy state of life.

Thirdly, never resist the will of thy superiors; but show them a ready obedience, fulfilling promptly all their commands, and most willingly such as humble thee most, and are most opposed to thy natural will and inclination.

Fourthly, beware of forming rash judgments of thy neighbour, especially with regard to this vice; and if he have manifestly fallen, have pity on him: be not bitter against him,

nor hold him in contempt; but rather gather from his fall the fruit of humility and self-knowledge, confessing thyself to be but dust and ashes, drawing nearer unto God in prayer, and shunning more carefully than ever all intercourse wherein there may be even the shadow of danger.

For if thou art forward to judge and despise others, God will correct thee to thy cost, and suffer thee to fall into the same fault in order to convince thee of thy weakness, that by such a humiliation both sins may be cured.

And even if thou shouldst escape this sin yet, unless thou lay aside thy uncharitable judgment of others, thy state will be very insecure.

Fifthly and lastly, beware, lest, finding thyself favoured with some enjoyment of spiritual delights, thou feel a certain vain complacency therein, and imagine thyself to be something, and that thine enemies are now no longer able to assault thee, because thou seemest to thyself to regard them with disgust, horror, and detestation. If thou art incautious in this matter, thou wilt easily fall.

II. During the temptation, consider whether it proceeds from internal or external causes.

By external, I mean curiosity of the eyes or ears, over-softness in dress, habits, and conversations, which excite to this sin.

The remedies in this case are purity, modesty, the refraining from seeing or hearing any thing which excites to this vice, and, as I said before, flight.

The internal are either the rebellion of the

flesh, or thoughts of the mind proceeding from our own evil habits or from the suggestion of the devil.

The rebellion of the flesh must be mortified by fasts, disciplines, hair-shirts, vigils, and other similar austerities, as discretion and obedience may direct.

Against evil thoughts, from whatever source arising, the remedies are as follows :

1. Occupation in the various duties proper to our state of life.

2. Prayer and meditation.

Prayer should be made in the following manner :

When first conscious of the presence of these evil thoughts, or even of such as may betoken their approach, fly for refuge at once to the crucifix, saying : " My Jesus ! my sweet Jesus ! help me speedily, that I may not fall into the hands of this enemy."

And sometimes, embracing the cross on which thy Lord is extended, and kissing repeatedly the wounds of His sacred feet, say lovingly : " O beauteous wounds ! chaste wounds ! holy wounds ! wound now this miserable impure heart of mine, and free it from all that offends Thee."

At the moment when temptations to carnal pleasures assail thee, I do not advise thee to meditate upon certain points recommended in many books as remedies against these temptations, such as the vileness of this vice, its insatiable craving, the bitterness and loathing, the peril and ruin of estate, life, honour, &c. which follow in its train.

This is not always a certain method of overcoming the temptation ; for if the mind repels these thoughts on the one hand, on the other they afford an opportunity, and expose us to the danger of taking pleasure in, and consenting to, them. Therefore the true remedy in all these cases is flight, not from these thoughts alone, but from every thing, however contrary to them, which may bring them before us.

Let thy meditation, then, for this end be on the Life and Passion of our crucified Redeemer.

And should the same thoughts again intrude themselves against thy will, and molest thee more than ever, as will very probably happen, be not discouraged on this account, nor leave off thy meditation, but continue it with all possible intensity ; not even turning from it to repel such thoughts, but giving thyself no more concern about them than if they in no way belonged to thee. There is no better method than this of resisting them, how incessant soever may be their attacks.

Thou wilt then conclude thy meditation with this or some similar supplication : “ Deliver me, O my Creator and Redeemer, from mine enemies, to the honour of Thy Passion and of Thine unspeakable goodness.” Suffer not thy thoughts to recur again to the subject ; for the bare recollection of it is not without danger.

Neither stay at any time to reason with such temptations, to find out whether thou hast consented to them or not ; for this is a device of the devil, who seeks, under the semblance

of good, to disquiet thee, and make thee distrustful and fainthearted, or hopes, by entangling thee in such discussions, to draw thee into some sin.

Therefore, in this temptation, when the consent is not evident, it is sufficient that thou confess the whole briefly to thy spiritual father, and then rest satisfied with his opinion, without thinking of it more.

But be sure faithfully to reveal every thought to him; and neither be restrained from so doing by shame or any other consideration.

For if, in dealing with all our enemies, we need the grace of humility to enable us to subdue them, in this case more than in any other we are bound to humble ourselves; this vice being almost always the punishment of pride.

III. When the temptation is over, however free, however perfectly secure thou mayest feel thyself from danger, keep far from all those objects which gave rise to the temptation, even though thou shouldst be induced to do otherwise for some apparently good and useful end. For this is a deception of our evil nature, and a snare of our cunning adversary, who transforms himself into an angel of light to bring us into darkness.

CH. XX.—HOW TO COMBAT SLOTH.

To avoid falling into the miserable bondage of sloth, which would not only hinder thy progress towards perfection, but also deliver thee into the hands of thine enemies, thou must observe the following rules :

1. Shun all curiosity concerning worldly

things and all attachment to them, and also every kind of occupation which belongs not to thy state of life.

2. Endeavour earnestly to respond immediately to every inspiration from above, and to every command of thy superiors ; doing every thing at the time and in the manner which is pleasing to them.

3. Never allow thyself in one moment's delay ; for that one little delay will soon be followed by another, and that by a third, and this again by others ; and to the last the senses will yield and give way more easily than to the first, having been already fascinated and enslaved by the pleasure they have tasted therein.

Hence the duty to be performed is either begun too late, or sometimes laid aside altogether, as too irksome to be endured.

Thus, by degrees, a habit of sloth is acquired, which, as we cannot disguise it from ourselves, we seek to excuse by vain purposes of future diligence and activity, while we are all the time held in bondage by it.

The poison of sloth overspreads the whole man ; not only infecting the will, by making exertion hateful to it, but also blinding the understanding, so that it is unable to see how vain and baseless are its intentions to do promptly and diligently at some future season what should be done at once, but is either wilfully neglected altogether or deferred to another time.

Nor is it enough that we perform our appointed work quickly ; we must, in order to

bring it to its highest possible perfection, do it at the very time required by its nature and quality, and with all suitable diligence.

For that is not diligence, but the subtlest form of sloth, which leads us to do our work before its time; not seeking to do it well, but despatching it hastily, that we may afterwards indulge in the sluggish repose on which our thoughts have been dwelling while we were hurrying over our business.

All this great evil proceeds from the want of duly considering the value of a good work performed at its right time, and with a spirit determined to brave the toil and difficulty put in the way of untried soldiers by the sin of sloth.

Call to mind, then, frequently, that a single elevation of the heart to God, a single genuflection in His honour, is worth more than all the treasures of the world; and that, as often as we do violence to ourselves and our sinful passions, a glorious crown of victory is prepared for us by angels' hands in the kingdom of heaven.

Remember also, on the other hand, that God gradually draws from the slothful the grace which He had once bestowed upon them; while He increases that of the diligent, permitting them at last to enter into His joy.

If thou art unequal at first to a bold encounter with toil and hardship, disguise them from thyself, that they may not seem so formidable as sloth would represent them.

The exercise before thee is perhaps to acquire some virtue by many repeated acts, by

many days of toil; and the enemies to be overcome seem to thee many and strong. Begin these acts, then, as if thou hadst but a few of them to perform, but a few days' conflict to endure. Fight only against one adversary, as if there were no more to be resisted, and in full confidence that with the help of God, thou wilt be stronger than they. By this means sloth will begin to grow feeble, and will make way at last for the gradual entrance of the contrary virtue.

I would say the same of prayer. An hour's prayer perhaps is needful for thee; and this seems a hard matter to sloth; but apply thyself to it, as if intending to pray but for the eighth part of an hour, thou wilt then easily pass on to another eighth; and so on to the whole.

But if in the second, or any other of these divisions thou shouldst feel too violent a repugnance and difficulty, leave the exercise awhile, lest thou become weary; but return to it shortly.

Thou shouldst pursue the same method with respect to manual labours, when thou art called upon to do things which to sloth appear many in number and difficult of performance, and so cause thee much disturbance of mind. Begin, therefore, quietly and courageously with one, as if thou hadst no more to do; and when thou hast diligently accomplished this, thou wilt be able to perform all the others with far less labour than sloth would have thee believe possible.

But if thou dost not pursue this method,

and encounter resolutely the toil and hardships which lie in thy way, the vice of sloth will so gain the mastery over thee, that thou wilt be for ever harassed and annoyed, not only by the present toil and difficulty, which will always attend the first exercises of virtue, but even by the distant prospect of them. Thou wilt be for ever in fear of being tried and assailed by enemies, or laden with some fresh burden; so that even in the time of peace thou wilt live in perpetual disquiet.

Know, also, that this vice of sloth will not only consume by its secret poison the first and feeble roots, which would in time have produced habits of virtue, but even the roots of habits already acquired. Like a worm in the wood, it will go on insensibly corroding and eating away the marrow of the spiritual life. By these means does the devil seek to ensnare and delude all men; but especially spiritual persons.

Watch, therefore, and pray, and labour diligently, and delay not to weave the web of thy wedding-garment, that thou mayest be found ready adorned to meet the Bridegroom.

And remember daily, that He who gives thee the morning does not promise thee the evening; and though He gives the evening, yet promises not the morrow.

Spend, therefore, every moment of every hour according to God's will, as if it were thy last; and so much the more carefully, as for every moment thou wilt have to give the strictest account.

Finally, I warn thee to account that day lost,

though it may have been full of busy action, in which thou shalt neither have gained some victory over thine evil inclinations and thy self-will, nor returned thanks to thy Lord for His mercies, and especially for His bitter passion endured for thee ; and for His sweet and fatherly correction, when He has made thee worthy to receive at His hand the inestimable treasure of suffering.

CH. XXL.—OF THE REGULATION OF THE EXTERIOR SENSES, AND HOW TO PASS ON FROM THESE TO THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE DIVINITY.

GREAT watchfulness and continual exercise is needed for the due ordering and regulation of the exterior senses ; for the appetite, which is, as it were, the captain of our corrupt nature, inclines us to an immoderate seeking after pleasure and enjoyment ; and being unable by itself to attain them, it uses the senses as its soldiers, and as natural instruments for laying hold of objects whose images it draws to itself and impresses on the mind. Hence arises the pleasure, which, by reason of the relation subsisting between it and the flesh, diffuses itself over all the senses which are capable of it, infecting both soul and body with a common contagion, which corrupts the whole.

Thou seest the evil ; now mark the remedy.

Take good heed not to let thy senses stray freely where they will ; nor to use them when pleasure alone, and not utility, necessity, nor any good end, is the motive. And if inadvertently they have been allowed to wander too far, recall them at once ; or so regulate

them, that, instead of remaining as before in a miserable captivity to empty pleasures, they may gather a noble spoil from each passing object, and bring it home to the soul, that, collected within herself, she may rise with a steadier flight towards heaven to the contemplation of God. Which may be done in the following manner :

When any object is presented before one of thine exterior senses, separate in thy mind from the material thing the principle which is in it ; and reflect that of itself it possesses nothing of all that which it appears to have, but that all is the work of God, who endows it invisibly by His Spirit with the being, beauty, goodness, or whatever virtue belongs to it. Then rejoice that thy Lord alone is the Cause and Principle of such great and varied perfections, and that they are all eminently contained in Himself,—all created excellences being but most minute degrees of His divine and infinite perfections. When engaged in the contemplation of grand and noble objects, reduce the creature mentally to its own nothingness ; fixing thy mind's eye on the great Creator therein present, who gave it that great and noble being, and delighting thyself in Him alone, say : “ O Divine Essence, and above all things to be desired, how greatly do I rejoice that Thou alone art the infinite Principle of every created being ! ”

In like manner, at the sight of trees, plants, or suchlike objects, thou wilt understand that the life which they have, they have not of themselves, but from the Spirit which thou

seest not, and which alone quickens them. Say, therefore: "Behold here the true Life from which, in which, and by which all things live and grow! O living Joy of this heart!"

So, at the sight of brute animals, raise thy thoughts to God, who gave them sensation and motion, saying: "O Thou first Mover of all that moveth, Thou art Thyself immovable; how greatly do I rejoice in thy steadfastness and stability!"

And if attracted by the beauty of the creature, separate that which thou seest from the Spirit which thou seest not, and consider that all that exterior beauty is solely derived from the invisible Spirit which is its source; and joyfully say: "Behold, these are streamlets from the uncreated Fountain; behold, these are drops from the infinite Ocean of all good. O, how does my inmost heart rejoice at the thought of that eternal infinite Beauty which is the source and origin of all created beauty!"

And on the discovery in other men of goodness, wisdom, justice, or similar virtues, make the same mental separation, and say to thy God: "O most rich Treasure-house of all virtues, how greatly do I rejoice that from Thee and through Thee alone flows all goodness, and that all in comparison with Thy Divine perfections is as nothing! I thank Thee, Lord, for this and every good gift which Thou hast vouchsafed to my neighbour; remember, Lord, my poverty, and my great need of this very virtue."

When thou stretchest out thy hand to do any thing, reflect that God is the first cause

on that action, and thou but His living instrument; and raising thy thoughts to Him, say thus: "How great, O supreme Lord of all, is my interior joy, that without Thee I can do nothing, and that Thou art in truth the first and chief Worker of all things!"

When eating or drinking, consider that it is God who gives its relish to thy food. Delighting thyself, therefore, in Him alone, say: "Rejoice, O my soul, that as there is no true contentment but in thy God, so in Him alone mayest thou in all things content thyself."

When thy senses are gratified by some sweet odour, rest not in this enjoyment, but let thy thoughts pass on to the Lord, from whom this sweetness is derived; and, inwardly consoled by this thought, say: "Grant, O Lord, that like as I rejoice because all sweetness flows from Thee, so may my soul, pure and free from all earthly pleasure, ascend on high as a sweet savour acceptable unto Thee."

When thou listenest to the harmony of sweet sounds, let thy heart turn to God, saying: "How do I rejoice, my Lord and God, in Thine infinite perfections, which not only make a super-celestial harmony within Thyself, but also unite the angels in heaven and all created beings in one marvellous harmonious concert!"

CH. XXII.—HOW THE SAME THINGS ARE TO US MEANS WHEREBY TO REGULATE OUR SENSES, AND TO LEAD US ON TO UPGRADE ON THE INCARNATE WORD IN THE MYSTERIES OF HIS LIFE AND PASSION.

I HAVE shown thee how we may raise our minds from sensible objects to the contemplation of

the Divinity. Now learn a method of taking occasion from the same to meditate on the Incarnate Word, and the most sacred mysteries of His Life and Passion.

All things in the universe may serve to this end, if first thou beholdest God in them as the sole first cause, who has bestowed on them all the being, beauty, and excellence which they possess. Passing on from thence, consider how great, how immeasurable is His goodness; who, being the sole Principle and Lord of all creation, was pleased to descend so low as to become incarnate, to suffer and to die for man, permitting the very works of His hands to arm themselves against Him, and to crucify Him. Many objects will then bring these holy mysteries before thy mind's eye, such as weapons, cords, scourges, pillars, thorns, reeds, nails, hammers, and other instruments of His passion.

Poor hovels will recall to our memory the stable and manger of our Lord. Rain will remind us of the drops of Divine blood which fell from His most sacred body in the garden, and watered the ground. Rocks will represent to us those which were rent asunder at His death. The earth will bring to our memory the earthquake at that hour; the sun, the darkness that then covered it. The sight of water will speak to us of that stream which flowed from His most sacred side.

The same may be said of other similar things.

Let the taste of wine, or other liquid, remind thee of thy Lord's vinegar and gall.

If sweet perfumes refresh thee, think of the

ill savour of the dead bodies which were around Him on Calvary.

While dressing, recollect that the Eternal Word clothed Himself with human flesh that He might clothe thee with His divinity.

When undressing, remember Christ, who was stripped of His garments to be scourged and crucified for thee.

If thou hearest the shouts and cries of a multitude, think of those hateful words: "Away with Him, away with Him! crucify Him, crucify Him!" which sounded in His Divine ears.

At each stroke of the clock, think of that deep sorrow and heaviness of heart which Jesus was pleased to endure in the garden, as the fear of His approaching death and passion began to fall upon Him; or image to thyself those heavy blows which nailed Him to the cross.

On any occasion of grief or sorrow which presents itself, whether thine own or another's, reflect that all these things are as nothing, compared to the inconceivable anguish which pierced and wrung the soul and body of thy Lord.

CH. XXIII.—OF SOME OTHER MEANS WHEREBY WE MAY REGULATE OUR SENSES ACCORDING TO THE DIFFERENT OCCASIONS WHICH PRESENT THEMSELVES.

HAVING now seen by what means we may raise the mind from sensible objects to the contemplation of the Divinity and of the mysteries of the Incarnate Word, I will here add some helps for various subjects of meditation, that

as the tastes of souls are many and various, so also may be their nourishment. This may be useful, not only to simple persons, but also to those of higher intellect and more advanced in the spiritual life, who nevertheless may not at all times be equally disposed and ready for higher contemplations.

Nor needest thou fear to be perplexed by the variety of the methods described, if thou wilt only observe the rule of discretion, and attend to the advice of others; which I wish thee to follow with all humility and confidence, not in this instance only, but with regard to all other counsels which thou shalt receive from me.

At the sight of all the things which please the eyes and are prized on earth, consider that all these are vile as dust compared with heavenly riches, after which, despising the whole earth, do thou aspire with undivided affections.

When looking upon the sun, consider that thy soul is brighter and more beautiful if it be in thy Creator's favour; if not, that it is blacker and more hateful than the darkness of hell.

When thy bodily eyes are lifted to the heavens above thee, let the eyes of thy mind penetrate even to the heaven of heavens; and there fix thyself in thought as in the place prepared for thy eternal and blessed abode, if thou shalt live a holy life on earth.

On hearing the songs of birds, or other melodious sounds, lift up thy heart to the songs of Paradise, where resounds a ceaseless Alleluia; and pray the Lord to make thee worthy

to praise Him, together with those celestial spirits, for ever and ever.

If thou art conscious of taking delight in the beauty of the creature, remember that there the deadly serpent lies hid, ready and eager to wound, if not to slay thee, and say to him : " O accursed serpent, how dost thou insidiously lie in wait to devour me ! " Then, turning to thy God, say : " Blessed be Thou, O my God, who hast discovered to me the hidden enemy, and delivered me from his ravenous jaws."

Then fly at once from the allurements to the wounds of thy crucified Lord, letting thy mind rest on them, considering how acutely He suffered in His most sacred flesh to free thee from sin, and make thee detest all carnal delights. Another way of escape from this perilous allurements is, to consider what will be, after death, the condition of that object which now so delights thee.

When walking, remember that every step brings thee nearer to death.

Let the flight of birds and the flowing of water remind thee that thy life is hastening far more swiftly to its close.

Let storms of wind, lightning and thunder, remind thee of the tremendous day of judgment; and kneeling down, worship God, and beseech Him to give thee time and grace duly to prepare thyself to appear before His most high Majesty.

In the variety of accidents which may befall thee, exercise thyself thus :

When, for instance, thou art oppressed by

sadness or melancholy, or sufferest heat, cold, or the like, lift up thy heart to that Eternal Will, which for thine own good willeth that at such a time and in such a measure thou shouldst endure this discomfort. Then, rejoicing in the love thus shown thee by thy God, and at the opportunity of serving Him in the way He is pleased to appoint, say in thine heart, "Behold in me is the Divine Will fulfilled, which from all eternity has lovingly appointed that I should now endure this trial. All praise be to Thee for the same, my most gracious Lord!"

When any good thought arises in thy mind, turn instantly to God, and, referring it to Him, give thanks to Him for it.

When reading, behold thy Lord in the words, and receive them as from His divine lips.

When thou lookest upon the holy Cross, consider that it is the standard of thy warfare; that by forsaking it thou wilt fall into the hands of cruel enemies, but that by following it thou wilt enter heaven laden with glorious spoils.

When thou seest the dear image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let thy heart turn to her who reigns in Paradise, thanking her that she was ever ready to do the will of God, that she brought forth and nourished the Redeemer of the world, and that her favour and assistance never fail us in our spiritual conflict.

The images of the saints represent to thee so many champions, who, having courageously run their course, have opened a way for thee, wherein, if thou wilt press onward, thou also

shalt with them be crowned with immortal glory.

When thou seest a church, thou mayest, amid other devout reflections, consider that thy soul is the temple of God, and therefore to be kept pure and spotless as His dwelling-place.

When thou hearest the triple sound of the *Angelus*, make the following brief meditations in conformity with the words which are said before each recitation of the *Ave Maria*. At the first stroke of the bell, thank God for that embassy from heaven to earth which was the beginning of our salvation. At the second, rejoice with the blessed Mary at the sublime dignity to which she was exalted by her singular and most profound humility. At the third, adore, together with the most blessed Mother and the Angel Gabriel, the Divine Child just now conceived ; and forget not reverently to bow thy head at each signal, especially the last.

These meditations will serve for all seasons. The following, which are divided for morning, noon, and evening, belong to the Passion of our Lord : for we are deeply bound frequently to remember the sorrow endured by our Lady on this account, and most ungrateful were we to neglect it.

In the evening, then, recall to mind the anguish of that most pure Virgin at the bloody sweat, the capture, and the hidden sorrows of her blessed Son.

In the morning, compassionate her affliction at His presentation before Pilate and Herod.

His condemnation, and the bearing of His cross.

At mid-day, meditate upon that sword of anguish which wounded the heart of that disconsolate Mother at the crucifixion and death of the Lord, and the cruel piercing of His most sacred side.

These meditations on our Lady's sorrows may be made from the evening of Thursday till the Saturday at noon, the others on the remaining days of the week. I leave all this, however, to thy particular devotion and the occasions offered by external things; and, to express in few words the method by which thou must regulate thy senses, take care in all things and under all circumstances, that thou be moved and drawn, not by hatred or love of them, but by the will of God alone, loving and hating that only which He wills thee to hate or love.

And observe, that I have not given thee these methods for regulating the senses that thou mayest dwell upon them; for thy mind should almost always be fixed upon thy Lord, who wills that by frequent acts thou shouldst apply thyself to conquer thine enemies and thy sinful passions, both by resisting them, and by making acts of the contrary virtues; but I have taught them to thee that thou mayest know how to rule thyself on needful occasions.

For thou must know, that there is little fruit in a multiplicity of spiritual exercises; which, however excellent in themselves, often lead to mental perplexity, self-love, instability, and the snare of the devil.

CH. XXIV.—OF THE WAY TO RULE THE TONGUE.

It is very necessary that the tongue be well bridled and regulated, because we are all much inclined to let it run on upon those things which are most pleasing to the senses.

Much speaking springs ordinarily from pride. We persuade ourselves that we know a great deal; we take delight in our own conceits, and endeavour by needless repetitions to impress them on the minds of others, that we may exercise a mastery over them, as though they needed instruction from us.

It is not possible to express in few words the many evils which arise from over-much speaking.

Talkativeness is the mother of sloth, the sign of ignorance and folly, the door of slander, the minister of falsehood, the destroyer of fervent devotion. A multitude of words adds strength to evil passions, by which again the tongue is the more easily led on to indiscreet talking.

Do not indulge in long conversations with those who are unwilling to hear thee, lest thou weary them; nor with those who love to listen to thee, lest thou exceed the bounds of modesty.

Avoid loud and positive speaking, which is not only odious in itself, but is also a sign of presumption and vanity.

Never speak of thyself or thy doings, nor of thy kindred, except in case of absolute necessity, and then with all possible brevity and reserve. If others seem to speak over-much of themselves, try to put a favourable construc-

tion upon their conduct; but do not imitate it, even though their words seem to tend to self-humiliation and self-accusation.

Speak as little as may be of thy neighbour, or of any thing concerning him, unless an occasion offers to say something in his praise.

Speak willingly of God, and especially of His love and goodness; but with fear and caution, lest even here thou fall into error: rather take pleasure in listening while others speak of Him, treasuring up their words in the depth of thy heart.

Let the sound of men's voices strike only upon thine ear; do thou meanwhile lift up thy heart to God; and if thou must needs listen to their discourse in order to understand and reply to it, yet neglect not to cast thine eye in thought to heaven, where thy God dwelleth, and contemplate His loftiness, as He ever beholds thy vileness.

Consider well the things which thy heart suggests to thee before they pass on to thy tongue; for thou wilt perceive that many of them would be better suppressed. Nay, I can still further assure thee, that not a few even of those which thou wilt then think it expedient to speak would be far better buried in silence; and so thou wilt perceive, upon reflection, when the opportunity for speaking is past.

Silence is a strong fortress in the spiritual combat, and a sure pledge of victory.

Silence is the friend of him who distrusts himself and trusts in God; it is the guard of holy prayer, and a wonderful aid in the practice of virtue.

In order to acquire the practice of silence, consider frequently the great benefits which arise therefrom, and the evils and dangers of talkativeness. Love this virtue ; and in order to acquire the habit of it, keep silence occasionally, even at times when thou mightest lawfully speak, provided this be not to thine own prejudice, or to that of others.

And thou wilt be greatly helped to this by withdrawing from the society of men ; for in the place of this, thou wilt have the society of angels, saints, and of God Himself.

Lastly, remember the combat which thou hast in hand, that, seeing thou hast so much to do, thou mayest the more willingly refrain from all superfluous words.

THE XXV.—THAT, IN ORDER TO FIGHT SUCCESSFULLY AGAINST HIS ENEMIES, THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST MUST AVOID AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ALL PERTURBATION AND DISQUIET OF MIND.

WHEN we have lost our peace of mind, we should do our utmost to recover it ; neither is there any accident of life which should reasonably have power to deprive us of that peace, or even to trouble it.

Over our own sins we have indeed cause to mourn deeply ; but our sorrow, as I have shown more than once, should be calm ; and in like manner, without any disquiet, but with a holy feeling of charity, should we compassionate other sinners, and weep, at least inwardly, over their offences.

As to other sad and trying events, such as sickness, wounds, or loss of dearest friends, pestilence, fire, war, or such-like evils, though these, being painful to nature, are for the most

part shunned by the men of this world, yet may we, by Divine grace, not only desire, but even love them, as just chastisements upon the wicked, and occasions of virtue to the just. For therefore does our Lord God take pleasure in sending them; and thus, borne forward by His will, we shall pass with a calm and quiet spirit through all the bitterness and contradictions of this life. And be assured, that all disquiet on our part is displeasing in His sight; for, of whatever kind it be, it is never free from imperfection, and always springs from some evil root of self-love.

Keep, therefore, a sentinel always on the watch, who, as soon as he shall discern the approach of any thing likely to disquiet or disturb thee, may give thee a signal to take up thy weapons of defence.

- And consider, that all these evils, and many others of a like kind, though outwardly they appear to be such, are not indeed real evils, nor can they rob us of any real good, but are all ordered or permitted by God for the righteous ends of which we have spoken, or for
- others most wise and holy, although beyond our power to discern.

So may the most untoward accident work for us much good, if we do but keep our souls in peace and tranquillity; otherwise all our exercises will produce little or no fruit.

Besides, when the heart is unquiet it is always exposed to manifold assaults of the enemy: and, moreover, in such a state we are incapable of discerning the right path and the sure way of holiness.

Our enemy, who above all things hates this peace, because the Spirit of God dwells and works marvellously therein, often seeks in a friendly disguise to rob us of it, by instilling into our hearts sundry desires which have a semblance of good ; but their deceitful nature may be detected by this test among others; that they rob us of our peace of mind.

Therefore, to avert so great an evil, when the sentinel gives notice of the approach of some new desire, on no account give it entrance into thy heart, until, with a free and unbiassed will, thou hast first presented it to God, and confessing thine ignorance and blindness, hast earnestly prayed to Him for light to discern whether it comes from Him or from the enemy. Have recourse also, if possible, to the judgment of thy spiritual father.

And, even if the desire should be from God, do not begin to carry it into execution till thou hast mortified thine own eagerness ; for a work preceded by such mortification will be far more acceptable to Him than if performed with all the impetuosity of nature ; nay, sometimes it may be that the mortification will please Him better than the work itself.

Thus, casting from thee all evil desires, and not venturing to carry even good desires into effect till thou hast first repressed thy natural impulses, thou shalt keep the fortress of thy heart in security and peace.

And in order to preserve it in perfect peace, thou must also guard and defend it from certain inward self-reproaches and remorseful feelings, which are sometimes from the devil,

though, as they accuse thee of some failing, they seem to come from God. By their fruits shalt thou know whence they proceed.

If they humble thee, if they make thee diligent in well-doing, if they take not from thee thy trust in God, then receive them with all thankfulness as coming from Him. But if they discourage thee, if they make thee fearful, distrustful, slack and feeble in good deeds, then be assured they come from the enemy; give no ear to them, but continue thine exercise.

And as anxiety at the approach of adverse events springs up even more frequently in our hearts, thou hast two things to do in order to ward off this assault.

The first is, carefully to search out and discover to what these events are adverse, whether to the soul, or to self-love and self-will.

For, if they be adverse to thine own will and to self-love, thy chief and greatest enemy, they are not to be called adverse, but to be esteemed special favours and helps from the most high God, to be received with a joyful heart and with thanksgiving.

And though they should be adverse to the soul, thou oughtest not on this account to lose thy peace of mind; as I will show thee in the following chapter.

The second is, to lift up the heart to God, accepting all things blindly from the hand of His Divine providence, ever full of manifold blessings beyond thy power to comprehend; and seeking to know nothing further.

CH. XXVI.—WHAT WE SHOULD DO WHEN WE ARE WOUNDED.

WHEN thou feelest thyself wounded from having weakly, or it may be even wilfully and deliberately, fallen into some sin, be not over-fearful or over-anxious, but turn instantly to God, saying :

“Behold, O Lord, what of myself I have done ! and what, indeed, could be expected of me but falls ?”

And then, after a short pause, humble thyself in thine own eyes, mourn over the offence committed against thy Lord ; and without falling into discouragement, be full of indignation against thy evil passions, especially that which has occasioned thy fall. Then say :

“Nor even here, Lord, should I have stopped, if Thy goodness had not withheld me.”

And here give thanks to Him, and love Him more than ever, wondering at the excess of His mercy, who, when thou hadst so deeply offended Him, stretched out His right hand to save thee from another fall.

Lastly, say, with great confidence in His infinite compassion :

“Forgive me, Lord, for Thine own sake ; suffer me not to depart from Thee, nor to be separated from Thee, nor evermore to offend Thee.”

And this done, do not sit down to consider whether God has pardoned thee or not ; for this is nothing else but pride, restlessness of mind, loss of time, and, under colour of various fair pretexts, a delusion of the devil. But, committing thyself unreservedly to the

merciful hands God, pursue thine exercise as if thou hadst not fallen.

And if thou shouldst fall and shouldst be wounded many times in the day, repeat what I have taught thee with no less faith the second, the third, and even the last time than the first; and despising thyself, and hating the sin more and more, strive to lead henceforth a life of greater watchfulness.

This exercise is very displeasing to the devil, both because he sees it to be most acceptable to God, and also because he is enraged to see himself overcome by one over whom he had been at first victorious. And therefore he seeks by many artful wiles to make us relinquish it; and, through our carelessness and lack of vigilance, he is but too often successful.

The harder, therefore, this exercise may seem to thee, the greater violence must thou do to thyself, renewing it repeatedly even after a single fall.

And if after any fault thou feel uneasy, distrustful, and confused in mind, the first thing to be done is, to recover thy peace and quietness of mind, and with it thy confidence in God. Armed with these, turn again to the Lord; for thy uneasiness on account of thy sin arises not from the consideration of the offence against God, but of the injury to thyself.

To recover this peace, discard entirely from thy mind the thought of thy fall, and set thyself to meditate on the unspeakable goodness of God; how He is beyond measure ready and willing to forgive every sin, how grievous soever; calling the sinner by manifold ways and

means to come to Him, that He may unite him to Himself in this life by His grace in order to his sanctification, and in the life to come by His glory for his eternal beatification.

And having quieted thy mind by these and the like reflections, turn thy thoughts once more to thy fall, according to the instructions given thee above.

Again, at the time of sacramental confession, to which I exhort thee to have recourse frequently, call to mind all thy falls, and with renewed sorrow and indignation at the offence against God, and renewed purpose never again to offend Him, disclose them with all sincerity to thy spiritual father.

CR. XXVII.—OF THE MEANS EMPLOYED BY THE DEVIL TO ASSAIL AND DECEIVE THOSE WHO DESIRE TO GIVE THEMSELVES UP TO THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE, AND THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY ENTANGLED IN THE BONDAGE OF SIN.

THOU must know, that the devil is intent upon nothing but our ruin, and that he does not use the same method of assault with all persons.

In order, then, to make known to thee some of his modes of attack, his stratagems and devices, I will set before thee several different conditions of men.

Some remain in the service of sin without a thought of escape.

Some would fain be free, but never make the attempt.

Others think they are walking in the way of holiness, while they are wandering far from it.

And lastly, some, after having attained unto holiness, fall into deeper perdition.

We will discourse separately of each.

CH. XXVIII.—OF THE DEVIL'S ASSAULTS AND DEVICES AGAINST THOSE WHOM HE HOLDS IN THE BONDAGE OF SIN.

WHEN the devil holds a man in the bondage of sin, his chief care is to blind his eyes more and more, and to avert from him every thing which might lead to a knowledge of his most wretched condition.

And not only does he, by instilling contrary thoughts, drive from him all reflections and inspirations which call him to conversion, but; by affording him ready opportunities, he makes him fall into other and greater sins. Hence, the thicker and darker waxes his blindness, the more desperate and habitual becomes his course of sin; and thus, from blindness to deeper blindness, from sin to fouler sin, his wretched life will whirl on even unto death; unless God, by His grace, should intervene to save him. The remedy for one in this unhappy condition is, to be ready to give diligent heed to the thoughts and inspirations which call him from darkness to light, crying with all his heart to his Creator, "O Lord, help me; help me speedily; leave me not any longer in the darkness of sin." And let him not fail to repeat this cry for mercy over and over again in these or the like words.

If possible, let him have immediate recourse to some spiritual guide, and ask aid and counsel, that so he may be delivered from the power of the enemy.

And if he cannot do this at the moment, let him fly with all speed to the crucifix, prostrating himself before it; and asking mercy and aid also from the Mother of God.

On this speed does the victory depend, as thou wilt learn in the next chapter.

CH. XXIX.—OF THE ARTS AND STRATAGEMS BY WHICH HE HOLDS IN BONDAGE THOSE WHO, KNOWING THEIR MISERY, WOULD FAIN BE FREE; AND HOW IT IS THAT OUR RESOLUTIONS PROVE SO OFTEN INEFFECTUAL.

WHEN a man begins to perceive the evil of his way of life, and to desire to change it, the devil often deludes and overcomes him by such means as these:

“Presently, presently.”

“Cras, cras”—(to-morrow, to-morrow)—as the raven cries.

“I wish first to consider and despatch this business, this perplexity, that I may then be able to give myself with greater tranquillity to spiritual things.”

This is a snare in which many men have been, and are still daily, entangled; and the cause of this is our own negligence and heedlessness, seeing that, in a matter touching the honour of God and the salvation of the soul, we neglect to seize instantly that effectual weapon: “Now, now;” wherefore “presently?” “To-day, to-day;” wherefore “to-morrow?” saying each one to himself:

“Even supposing this ‘presently’ and this ‘to-morrow’ should be granted to me, is it the way of safety and of victory to seek first to be wounded and to commit fresh disorders?”

Thou seest, then, that the way to escape this snare, and that mentioned in the preceding chapter, and to subdue the enemy, is, to yield prompt obedience to all heavenly thoughts and inspirations.

Prompt obedience, I say, and not mere resolutions; for these are often fallacious, and many have been deceived thereby from various causes.

1st. Because our resolutions are not founded upon self-distrust and trust in God. But our excessive pride, whence proceeds this blindness and delusion, prevents our perceiving it.

The light to see and the medicine to cure it both proceed from the goodness of God, who suffers us to fall that He may recall us thereby from self-confidence to confidence in Him alone; and from pride to self-knowledge.

Thy resolutions, therefore, to be effectual, must be steadfast; and to be steadfast, they must be free from all self-confidence, and humbly based on confidence in God.

2dly. When we are making our resolutions, we dwell on the beauty and excellence of virtue, which attracts our will, slack and feeble as it is; but when confronted by the difficulties which attend the attainment of virtue, the weak and untried will fails and draws back.

Learn, therefore, to love the difficulties which attend the attainment of all virtues more than even the virtues themselves, and use these difficulties in various measures to strengthen thy will, if thou desirest in good earnest to acquire these virtues.

And know, that the more courageously and lovingly thou shalt embrace these difficulties, the more speedy and complete shall be thy victory over self and all thine other enemies.

3dly. In our resolutions we too often look rather to our own advantage than to the will

of God and the acquisition of the virtues He requires of us. This is frequently the case with resolutions made in times of great spiritual joy or acute sorrow, when we seem unable to find any relief but in a resolution to give ourselves wholly to God and to the practice of virtue.

To avoid this snare, take care in times of spiritual consolation to be very cautious and humble in thy resolutions, especially in thy vows and promises; and in tribulation let thy resolution be to bear thy cross patiently, according to the will of God,—nay, to exalt it, refusing all earthly, and if so be even all heavenly consolation. Let thy one desire, thy one prayer, be that God would help thee to bear all adverse things, keeping the virtue of patience unstained, and giving no displeasure to thy Lord.

CH. XXX.—OF A DELUSION OF THOSE WHO IMAGINE THEY ARE GOING ONWARD TO PERFECTION.

OUR malignant foe, thus repulsed in his first and second assault and stratagem, has recourse to a third, which is, to turn away our attention from the enemies who are close at hand to injure and assail us, and to fill us with resolutions and desires after higher degrees of perfection.

Hence we are continually being wounded; yet we pay no attention to our wounds, and looking upon these resolutions as already fulfilled, we take pride in them in various ways.

And while we cannot endure the least thing or the slightest word which crosses our will.

we waste our time in long meditations and resolutions to endure the acutest sufferings on earth or in purgatory for the love of God. And because our inferior part feels no repugnance at these things in the distance, we flatter ourselves, miserable creatures as we are, into the conceit that we belong to the class of patient and heroic sufferers.

To avoid this snare, resolve to fight manfully against the enemies who are close at hand, and actually waging war against thee. Thou wilt thus discover whether thy resolutions are real or imaginary, weak or strong; and so thou wilt go on to virtue and perfection by the beaten and royal road.

But against enemies who are not wont to trouble thee I do not advise thee to take up arms, unless there appear a probability of their making an attack at some future time. In this case it is lawful to make resolutions beforehand, that thou mayest be found strong and prepared.

Do not, however, judge of thy resolutions by their effects, even though thou shouldst have long and faithfully exercised thyself in virtue; but be very humble with regard to them; fear thyself and thine own weakness, and trust in God, and seek His help by frequent prayer to strengthen and preserve thee from all dangers, and especially from the very slightest presumption or self-confidence.

For in this case, though we may not be able to overcome some slight defects which our Lord sometimes leaves in us in order to greater humility and self-knowledge, and for the pro-

tection of some virtue, we may yet be permitted to form purposes of aspiring to higher degrees of perfection.

CH. XXXI.—OF THE DEVIL'S ASSAULTS AND STRATAGEMS IN ORDER TO DRAW US AWAY FROM THE PATH OF HOLINESS.

THE fourth device of the Evil One, when he sees us advancing steadily towards holiness, is, to excite within us a variety of good desires, that by this means he may lead us away from the exercise of virtue into sin.

A sick person is perhaps bearing his illness with a patient will. The cunning adversary knows that by this means he may attain to a habit of patience; and he immediately sets before him all the good works which in a different condition he might be able to perform, and tries to persuade him that if he were but well he would be able to serve God better, and be more useful to himself and others.

Having once aroused such wishes within him, he goes on increasing them by degrees, till he makes him restless at the impossibility of carrying them into effect; and the deeper and stronger such wishes become, the more does this restlessness increase. Then the enemy leads him on gently, and with a stealthy step, to impatience at the sickness, not as sickness, but as a hindrance to those good works which he so anxiously desires to perform for some greater good.

When he has brought him thus far, with the same art he removes from his mind the end he had in view, to serve God and perform good works, and leaves him only the bare desire to

be rid of his sickness. And then, if this does not happen according to his wish, he is so much troubled as to become actually impatient; and so unconsciously he falls from the virtue in which he was exercising himself into the opposite vice.

The way to guard against and resist this snare is, to be very careful, when in a state of trial, not to give way to desires after any good work, which, being out of thy power to execute, would very probably disquiet thee.

In such cases, resign thyself with all patience, resignation, and humility to the conviction that thy desires would not have the effect thou thinkest, inasmuch as thou art far more insignificant and unstable than thou accountest thyself to be.

Or else believe that God, in His surer counsels, or on account of thy unworthiness, is not pleased to accept this work at thy hand, but will rather that thou shouldst patiently abase and humble thyself under the gentle and mighty hand of His will.

In like manner, if prevented by thy spiritual father, or in any other way, from attending as frequently as thou desirest to thy devotions, and especially Holy Communion, suffer not thyself to be troubled or disquieted by longings after them, but, casting off all that is thine own, clothe thyself with the good pleasure of thy Lord, saying within thyself:

“If the eye of Divine Providence had not perceived sin and ingratitude in me, I should not now be deprived of the blessing of receiving the most holy Sacrament; but since my

Lord thus makes known to me my unworthiness, be His holy name for ever blessed and praised. I trust, O Lord, that in Thine infinite loving-kindness Thou wilt so rule my heart, that it may please Thee in all things in doing or suffering Thy will; that it may open before Thee, so that, entering into it spiritually, Thou mayest comfort and strengthen it against the enemies who seek to draw it away from Thee. Thus may all be done as seems good in Thy sight. My Creator and Redeemer, may Thy will be now and ever my food and sustenance! This one favour only do I beg of Thee, O my Beloved, that my soul, freed and purified from every thing displeasing to Thee, and adorned with all virtues, may be ever prepared for Thy coming, and for whatsoever it may please Thee to do with me."

If thou wilt observe these rules, know for certain that, when baffled in any good work which thou hast a desire to perform,—be the hindrance from the devil, to disquiet thee and turn thee aside from the way of virtue, or be it from God, to make trial of thy submission to His will,—thou wilt still have an opportunity of pleasing thy Lord in the way most acceptable to Him. And herein consists true devotion, and the service which God requires of us.

I warn thee, also, lest thou grow impatient under trials, from whatever source proceeding, that, in using the lawful means which God's servants are wont to use, thou use them not with the desire and hope to obtain relief, but because it is the will of God that they should be used; for we know not whether His Divine

Majesty will be pleased by their means to deliver us.

Otherwise thou wilt fall into further evils ; for if the event should not fulfil thy purpose and desires, thou wilt easily fall into impatience, or thy patience will be defective, not wholly acceptable to God, and of little value.

Lastly, I would here warn thee of a hidden deceit of our self-love, which is wont on certain occasions to cover and justify our faults. For instance, a sick man who has but little patience under his sickness conceals his impatience under the cover of zeal for some apparent good ; saying, that his vexation arises not really from impatience under his sufferings, but is a reasonable sorrow, because he has incurred it by his own fault, or else because others are harassed or wearied by the trouble he gives them, or by some other cause.

In like manner, the ambitious man, who frets after some unattained honour, does not attribute his discontent to his own pride and vanity, but to some other cause, which he knows full well would give him no concern did it not touch himself. So neither would the sick man care if they, whose fatigue and trouble on his account seems to give him so much vexation, should have the same care and trouble on account of the sickness of another. A plain proof that the root of such men's sorrow is not concern for others, or any thing else, but an abhorrence of every thing that crosses their own will.

Therefore, to avoid this and other errors, bear patiently, as I have told thee, every trial

and every sorrow, from whatever cause arising.

CH. XXXII.—OF THE ABOVE-NAMED LAST ASSAULT AND STRATAGEM, BY WHICH THE DEVIL SEEKS TO MAKE THE VIRTUES WE HAVE ACQUIRED THE OCCASIONS OF OUR RUIN.

THE cunning and malicious serpent fails not to tempt us by his artifices even by means of the very virtues we have acquired, that, leading us to regard them and ourselves with complacency, they may become our ruin; exalting us on high, that we may fall into the sin of pride and vain-glory.

To preserve thyself from this danger, choose for thy battle-field the safe and level ground of a true and deep conviction of thy own nothingness, that thou art nothing, that thou knowest nothing, that thou canst do nothing, and hast nothing but misery and sin, and deservest nothing but eternal damnation.

Entrench thyself firmly within the limits of this truth, and suffer not thyself to be enticed so much as a hair's-breadth therefrom by any evil thought, or aught else that may befall thee; knowing well that these are so many enemies, who would slay or wound thee shouldst thou fall into their hands.

In order to acquit thyself well in this exercise of the true knowledge of thine own nothingness, observe the following rule:

As often as thou dost reflect upon thyself and thy own works, consider always what thou art of thyself, and not what thou art by the aid of God's grace, and so esteem thyself as thou shalt thus find thyself to be.

Consider first the time before thou wert in

existence, and thou wilt see thyself to have been during all that abyss of eternity a mere nothing, and that thou didst nothing, and couldst have done nothing, towards giving thyself an existence.

Next consider the time since thou didst receive a being from the sole bounty of God. And here, also, if thou leave to Him that which is His own (His continual care of thee, which sustains thee every moment of thy life), what art thou of thyself but still a mere nothing?

For, undoubtedly, were He to leave thee for one moment to thyself, thou wouldst instantly return to that first nothingness from whence thou wast drawn by His almighty hand.

It is plain that, in the order of nature, and viewed in thyself alone, thou hast no reason to esteem thyself, or to desire the esteem of others.

Again, in the life of grace and the performance of good works, what good or meritorious deed could thy nature perform by itself if deprived of Divine assistance? For, considering, on the other hand, the multitude of thy past transgressions, and moreover the multitude of other sins from which God's compassionate hand has alone withheld thee, thou wilt find that thine iniquities, being multiplied not only by days and years, but by acts and habits of sin (one evil habit drawing another after it), would have swelled to an almost infinite amount, and so have made of thee another infernal Lucifer. Hence, if thou wouldst not rob God of the praise of His goodness, but cleave faithfully to

Him, thou must learn day by day to think more humbly of thyself.

And be very careful to deal justly in this judgment of thyself, or it may do thee no little injury.

For if in the knowledge of thine own iniquity thou surpass a man who, in his blindness, accounts himself to be something, thou wilt lose exceedingly, and fall far below him in the action of the will, if thou desire to be esteemed and regarded by men for that which thou knowest thyself not to be.

If, then, thou desirest that the consciousness of thy vileness and sinfulness should protect thee from thine enemies, and make thee dear to God, thou must not only despise thyself, as unworthy of any good and deserving of every evil, but thou must love to be despised by others, detesting honours, rejoicing in shame, and stooping on all occasions to offices which others hold in contempt. Thou must make no account at all of their judgment, lest thou be thereby deterred from this holy exercise. But take care that the end in view be solely thine own humiliation and self-discipline, lest thou be in any degree influenced by a certain lurking pride and spirit of presumption, which, under some specious pretext or other, often causes us to make little or no account of the opinions of others.

And shouldst thou perchance come to be loved, esteemed, or praised by others for any good gift bestowed on thee by God, be not moved a single step thereby; but collect thyself steadily within the stronghold of this true

and just judgment of thyself, first turning to God, and saying to Him with all thine heart :

“O Lord, never let me rob Thee of Thy honour and the glory of Thy grace ; to Thee be praise and honour and glory, to me confusion of face.” And then say mentally of him who praises thee : “ Whence is it that he accounts me good, since truly my God and His works are alone good ?”

For by thus giving back to the Lord that which is His own, thou wilt keep thine enemies afar off, and prepare thyself to receive greater gifts and favours from thy God.

And if the remembrance of good works expose thee to any risk of vanity, view them instantly, not as thine own, but as God's ; and say to them : “ I know not how ye did appear and originate in my mind, for ye derived not your being from me ; but the good God and His grace created, nourished, and preserved you. Him alone, then, will I acknowledge as your true and first Parent, Him will I thank, and to Him will I return all the praise.”

Consider next, that not only do all the works which thou hast done fall short of the light which has been given thee to know them, and the grace to execute them, but also that in themselves they are very imperfect, and fall very short of that pure intention and due diligence and fervour with which they should be performed, and which should always accompany them.

If, then, thou wilt well consider this, thou wilt see reason rather for shame than for vain complacency, because it is but too true that

the graces which we receive pure and perfect from God are sullied in their use by our imperfections.

Again, compare thy works with those of the saints and other servants of God ; for by such comparison thou wilt find that thy best and greatest are of base alloy, and of little worth.

Next, measure them by those which Christ wrought for thee in the mystery of His life, and of His continual cross ; and setting aside the consideration of His Divinity, view His works in themselves alone : consider both the fervour and the purity of the love with which they were wrought, and thou wilt see that all thy works are indeed as nothing.

And lastly, if thou wilt raise thy thoughts to the Divinity and the boundless Majesty of thy God, and the service which He deserves at thy hands, thou wilt see plainly that thy works should excite in thee not vanity but fear.

Therefore, in all thy ways, in all thy works, however holy they may be, thou must cry unto thy Lord with all thy heart, saying : " God be merciful to me a sinner."

Further, I would advise thee to be very reserved in making known the gifts which God may have bestowed on thee ; for this is almost always displeasing to thy Lord, as He Himself plainly shows us in the following lesson.

Appearing once in the form of a child to a devout servant of His, she asked Him, with great simplicity, to recite the angelical salutation. He readily began : " Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus," and then stopped, being unwilling to

praise Himself in the words which follow. And while she was praying Him to proceed, He withdrew Himself from her, leaving His servant full of consolation because of the heavenly doctrine which, by His example, He had thus revealed to her.

Do thou also learn to humble thyself, and to acknowledge thyself, with all thy works, to be the nothing which thou art.

This is the foundation of all other virtues. God, before we existed, created us out of nothing; and now that we exist through Him, He wills that the whole spiritual edifice should be built on this foundation—the knowledge that of ourselves we are nothing. And the deeper we dig into this knowledge, the higher will the building rise. And in proportion as we clear away the earth of our own misery, the Divine Architect will bring solid stones for its completion.

And never imagine that thou canst dig deep enough; on the contrary, think this of thyself, that if any thing belonging to a creature could be infinite, it would be thine unworthiness.

With this knowledge, duly carried into practice, we possess all good; without it we are little better than nothing, though we should do the works of all the saints, and be continually absorbed in God.

O blessed knowledge, which makes us happy on earth, and blessed in heaven! O light, which, issuing from darkness, makes the soul bright and clear! O unknown joy, which sparkles amid our impurities! O nothingness, which, once known, makes us lords of all!

I should never weary of telling thee this : if thou wouldst give praise to God, accuse thyself, and desire to be accused by others. Humble thyself with all, and below all, if thou wouldst exalt Him in thyself and thyself in Him.

Wouldst thou find Him ? exalt not thyself, or He will fly from thee.

Abase thyself to the utmost, and He will seek thee and embrace thee.

And the more thou humblest thyself in thine own sight, and the more thou delightest to be accounted vile by others, and to be spurned as a thing abominable, the more lovingly will He esteem and embrace thee. Account thyself unworthy of so great a grace bestowed on thee by thy God, who suffered shame for thee in order to unite thee to Himself. Fail not to return Him continual thanks ; and be grateful to those who have been the occasion of thy humiliation, and still more to those who have trampled thee under their feet, thinking that thou hast endured it reluctantly, and not with thine own good-will. Yet were it even so, thou must suffer no outward token of reluctance to escape thee.

If, notwithstanding all these considerations, which are only too true, the cunning of the devil and our own ignorance and evil inclinations should yet prevail over us, so that thoughts of self-exaltation will still molest us and make an impression on our hearts, then is the time to humble ourselves the more profoundly in our own sight ; for we see by this proof that we have advanced but a little way in the spiritual life and in true self-knowledge, inasmuch

- . as we are unable to free ourselves from those annoyances which spring from the root of our empty pride. So shall we extract honey from the poison and healing from the wound.

CH. XXXIII.—SOME COUNSELS AS TO THE OVERCOMING OF EVIL PASSIONS AND THE ACQUISITION OF VIRTUE.

THOUGH I have said so much on the course to be pursued in order to conquer self and adorn it with all virtues, there still remain some other points concerning which I would give thee some advice.

1. In thine endeavours after holiness, never be persuaded to use such spiritual exercises as select formally different virtues for different days of the week, setting apart one for the attainment of each. But let the order of thy warfare and thine exercise be to combat those passions which have always injured and still continue to assault and injure thee; and to adorn thyself, and that with all possible perfection, with their contrary virtues.

For having once acquired these virtues, all others will be readily attained, as occasion offers, with little comparative exertion. And occasions will never be wanting; for all the virtues are linked together in one chain, and he who possesses one in perfection has all the others ready on the threshold of his heart.

2. Never set a fixed time, such as days, or weeks, or years, for the attainment of any virtue; but, as an infant newly born, a soldier just enlisted, fight thy way continually towards the summit of perfection. Never stand still, even for a moment; for to stand still in the

way of virtue and perfection is not to regain breath or courage, but to fall back, or to grow feebler than before.

By standing still, I mean flattering ourselves that we have perfectly acquired the virtue in question, and so taking less heed of the occasions which call us to fresh acts of it, or of little failures therein.

Therefore be careful, be fervent, be watchful, that thou neglect not the slightest opportunity of exercising any virtue. Love all such occasions, and especially those which are attended with the greatest difficulty, because habits are quickest formed and deepest rooted when the difficulties to be overcome are greatest; love those occasions, therefore, which present such difficulties.

Fly those only, and that with rapid step, with all diligence and speed, which might lead to the temptation of the flesh.

3. Be prudent and discreet in those exercises which may prove injurious to bodily health, such as self-chastisement by means of disciplines, hair-cloths, fasts, vigils, meditations, and the like; for these virtues must be acquired slowly and by degrees, as will be hereafter explained.

As to other virtues which are wholly internal, such as the love of God, contempt of the world, self-abasement, hatred of vicious passions and of sin, meekness and patience, love towards all men, towards those who injure us, and the like, it is not necessary to acquire these gradually, nor to mount by degrees to perfection therein; but thou shouldst strive at

once with all thy might to practise each with all possible perfection.

4. Let thy whole heart desire nothing, think of nothing, crave nothing, long for nothing, but to conquer that passion with which thou art struggling, and to attain its contrary virtue. Be this thy world, thy heaven, thy earth, thy whole treasure; and all with the sole view to please God. Whether eating or fasting, labouring or resting, watching or sleeping, at home or abroad, whether engaged in devotion or in manual labour, let all be directed to the conquest and extinction of this passion, and to the attainment of the contrary virtue.

5. Wage unceasing war against earthly pleasures and comforts, so will no vice have much power to assail thee. For all vices spring from this one root of pleasure; when this, therefore, is cut away by hatred of self, they lose their strength and power.

For if with one hand thou wilt try to fight against some particular sin or pleasure, and with the other dally with other earthly enjoyments, though their guilt be not mortal, but only venial, thy battles will be hard and bloody, thy victories infrequent and uncertain. Keep, therefore, constantly in mind these divine words: "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal."—*St. John* xii. 25. "Brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die."

6. Lastly, it would be well, it may be even necessary, for thee to make in the first place a

general confession, with all the necessary conditions, that thou mayest be the better assured of thy Lord's favour, to whom alone thou must look for all grace and victory.

CH. XXXIV.—VIRTUES ARE TO BE GRADUALLY ACQUIRED BY EXERCISING OURSELVES IN THEIR VARIOUS DEGREES, AND GIVING OUR ATTENTION FIRST TO ONE AND THEN TO ANOTHER.

ALTHOUGH the true servant of Christ who aspires to perfection should set no limit to his advancement, there are some kinds of spiritual fervour which require to be restrained with a certain discretion, lest, being embraced too ardently at first, they should give way and leave us in the midst of our course. Hence, besides what has been said as to moderation in exterior exercises, we have to learn, moreover, that even interior virtues are best acquired gradually, and in their due order; for thus what is small in the beginning soon becomes great and permanent. Thus, for instance, we should not ordinarily attempt to rejoice in afflictions, and to desire them, till we have first passed through the lower degrees of the virtue of patience.

Neither would I have thee give thy chief attention to all or to many virtues at once, but first to one and then to the others; for thus will the virtuous habit be more easily and firmly planted in the soul. For by the constant exercise of a single virtue the memory recurs to it more promptly on all occasions, the intellect grows quicker to discern new methods and reasons for attaining it, and the will inclines more readily and fervently to its

pursuit, than if occupied with many virtues at one and the same time.

And, by means of the uniformity of the exercise, the acts which relate to any single virtue are produced with less effort from the conformity between them. The one calls forth and aids his fellow; and by their mutual resemblance they make a deeper impression upon the heart, which is prepared and disposed for the reception of new seed by having already brought forth similar fruits.

These reasons have the greater force, as we know assuredly that whoever exercises himself well in one virtue learns at the same time how to exercise himself in another; and thus, by the inseparable connection between them, all grow together with the increase of one, as rays proceeding from one and the same Divine light.

CH. XXXV.—OF THE MEANS WHEREBY VIRTUES ARE ACQUIRED, AND HOW WE SHOULD USE THEM SO AS TO ATTEND FOR SOME CONSIDERABLE TIME TO ONE VIRTUE ONLY.

For the attainment of holiness we need, besides all that has been already described, a great and generous heart, a will that is neither slack nor remiss, but firm and resolute, and withal a certain expectation of having to pass through many bitter and adverse trials.

And further, there are particular inclinations and affections which we may acquire by frequently considering how pleasing they are to God, how excellent and noble in themselves, and how useful and necessary to us, inasmuch as from them and in them all perfection has its origin and end.

Let us, then, make a steadfast resolution every morning to exercise ourselves therein according to the occasions which may arise in the course of the day; during which we should often examine ourselves, to see whether or not we have fulfilled them, renewing them afterwards more earnestly. And all this with especial reference to that virtue which we have in hand.

So also, let the examples of the saints, and our prayers and meditations on the life and passion of Christ, which are so needful in every spiritual exercise, be applied principally to the particular virtue in which we are for the time exercising ourselves.

Let us do the same on all occasions which may arise, however various in kind, as we shall presently explain more particularly. Let us so inure ourselves to acts of virtue, both interior and exterior, that we may come at last to perform them with the same promptness and facility with which in times past we performed others agreeable to our natural will. And, as we said before, the more opposed such acts are to these natural wishes, the more speedily will the good habit be introduced into our soul.

The sacred words of Holy Scripture, either uttered with the lips or pondered in the heart, as may best suit our case, have a marvellous power to aid us in this exercise. We should therefore have many such in readiness to bear upon the virtue we wish to practise; and these we should repeat continually throughout the day, and especially at each rising of the rebel-

lious passion. For instance, if we are striving to attain the virtue of patience, we may repeat the following words, or others like them :

“ My children, suffer patiently the wrath which is come upon you.”—*Baruch* iv. 25.

“ The patience of the poor shall not perish for ever.”—*Psa.* ix. 18.

“ The patient man is better than the valiant ; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities.”—*Prov.* xvi. 32.

“ In your patience you shall possess your souls.”—*St. Luke* xxi. 19.

“ Let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us.”—*Heb.* xii. 1.

To the same end we may, in like manner, use such prayers as the following :

“ When, O my God, shall this heart of mine be armed with the buckler of patience ?”

“ When shall I learn to bear every trouble with a quiet mind, that so I may please my Lord ?”

“ O most dear sufferings, which liken me unto my Lord Jesus, crucified for me !”

“ Only life of my soul ! shall I ever, for Thy glory, live contented amid a thousand torments ?”

“ How blessed shall I be, if, in the midst of the fire of tribulation, I burn with the desire of even greater sufferings !”

Let us use these short prayers, and others suitable to our advancement in holiness, that so we may acquire the spirit of devotion.

These short prayers are called ejaculations, because they are darted like javelins towards heaven. They have great power to excite us

to virtue ; and will penetrate even to the heart of God, if only they have these two accompaniments for their wings :

The one—a full certainty that our exercise of virtue is well-pleasing to our God.

The other—a true and fervent desire for the attainment of virtue, for the sole end of pleasing His Divine Majesty.

CH. XXXVI.—THAT IN THE EXERCISE OF VIRTUE WE MUST PROCEED WITH UNCEASING WATCHFULNESS.

ONE of the most important and necessary means for the attainment of virtue, besides what has been already taught, is to press forward continually to the end we have proposed to ourselves, lest by standing still we fall back.

For when we cease to produce acts of virtue, many unruly passions are generated within us by the violent inclination of the sensitive appetite, and by other exterior influences, whereby virtue is destroyed, or at least diminished ; and moreover, we thus lose many gifts and graces with which our Lord might have rewarded our further progress. Therefore is the spiritual journey different from the course of the earthly traveller ; for he, by standing still, loses nothing of the ground already gained—as is the case with him who travels heavenward.

And moreover, the weariness of the earthly pilgrim increases with the continuance of his bodily motion ; while, in the spiritual journey, the farther a man advances, the more does his vigour and strength increase.

For, by the exercise of virtue, the resistance

of the inferior part of the soul, which made the way hard and wearisome, grows daily weaker; while the superior part, wherein the virtue resides, is in the same proportion established and strengthened.

Hence, as we advance in holiness, the pain which accompanied the progress gradually diminishes; and a certain secret joy, which, by the Divine operation, is mingled with that pain, increases hourly more and more. And thus, proceeding with increasing ease and delight from virtue to virtue, we reach at last the mountain-top; where the perfected spirit henceforth labours without weariness—nay, rather with joy and ecstasy—because, having now tamed and conquered its unruly passions, and overcome itself and all created things, it dwells for ever blessed in the bosom of the Most High, and there, while sweetly labouring, takes its rest.

CH. XXXVII.—THAT, AS WE MUST ALWAYS CONTINUE IN THE EXERCISE OF ALL THE VIRTUES, SO WE MUST NOT SHUN ANY OPPORTUNITY WHICH OFFERS FOR THEIR ATTAINMENT.

WE have seen very clearly that we must go forward without ever stopping in the way of perfection.

To this end, we ought to be very careful and vigilant not to let slip any opportunity which may present itself for the attainment of any virtue. For they have very little knowledge of this way who avoid as much as they can all such adverse things as might greatly assist their progress.

For, not to forget my accustomed advice, if thou wouldst acquire the habit of patience, it

is not expedient to avoid those persons, actions, or thoughts which move thee to impatience.

Withdraw not, therefore, from the society of any one because it is disagreeable ; but whilst conversing and holding intercourse with those who most annoy thee keep thy will always ready and disposed to endure whatever may befall thee, however wearisome and annoying ; for otherwise thou wilt never learn to be patient.

In like manner, if thou find any occupation irksome, either in itself, or because of the person who imposed it on thee, or because it hinders thee from doing something else more pleasing, do not therefore shrink from undertaking and persevering in it, though it disquiet thee, and though thou thinkest to find peace by neglecting it ; for this would be no true peace, as proceeding not from a soul purified from passion and adorned with virtues, neither couldst thou ever in this way learn to suffer.

I would say the same of harassing thoughts, which at times will annoy and disturb thy mind. There is no need to drive them entirely from thee ; for besides the pain they occasion, they accustom thee also to bear contradiction.

And to give thee contrary advice, would be to teach thee rather to shun labour than to attain to that virtue which thou hast in view.

It is very true that it becomes every man, and especially the tried soldier, to defend himself on these occasions with vigilance and dexterity ; now confronting his enemies, now evading them, according to the measure of spiritual strength and virtue which he has attained.

But, for all this, he must never actually turn back and retreat, so as to leave behind all opposition ; for even if we thereby save ourselves for the time from the peril of falling, we shall risk the exposing ourselves more to future attacks of temptation, not being armed and fortified beforehand by the exercise of the contrary virtue.

This counsel, however, applies not to the sins of the flesh, of which we have already spoken more particularly.

CH. XXXVIII.—THAT WE SHOULD HIGHLY ESTEEM ALL OPPORTUNITIES OF FIGHTING FOR THE ACQUISITION OF VIRTUES, AND CHIEFLY OF THOSE WHICH PRESENT THE GREATEST DIFFICULTIES.

I SHALL not be contented to have thee simply not shun the opportunities which may present themselves of attaining the different virtues ; I would have thee esteem them as things of great price and value, seek and embrace them joyfully whenever they present themselves, and account those dearest and most precious which are most repugnant to nature.

To this, by the Divine assistance, thou wilt be enabled to attain by impressing strongly upon thy mind the following considerations :

First, that opportunities are means adapted, nay, necessary, for the attainment of virtue. When, therefore, thou prayest to the Lord for any virtue, thou at the same time askest for occasions to exercise it ; else would thy prayer be vain, and thou wouldst be contradicting thyself and tempting thy God, who does not usually give patience without tribulation, nor humility without humiliations.

The same may be said of all virtues, which are most surely attained by means of crosses. And the more painful these are, the more effectually do they aid us, and therefore the more acceptable and welcome should they be. For acts of virtue performed in such circumstances are more generous and energetic, and open to us an easier and more speedy way to virtue.

But we ought also to value, and not to leave without its appropriate exercise, the most trifling occasion, though it be but a word or a look, which crosses our will; because the acts thus produced are more frequent, though less intense, than those called forth by circumstances of great difficulty.

The other consideration (of which we have already spoken) is, that all events which befall us come from God for our good, in order that we may derive fruit therefrom.

And although, as we have said before, some of these occasions, such as our own defects, or those of others, cannot be said to be *of* God, who willeth not sin, yet are they *from* Him, inasmuch as He permits them, and though able to hinder them, hinders them not. But all the sorrows and afflictions which come upon us, either by our own fault or the malice of others, are both *from* God and *of* God, because He concurs in them; and that which He would not have us *do*, as being full of a deformity beyond measure hateful to His most pure eyes, He would yet have us suffer, for our greater advancement in holiness, or for some other wise reason unknown to us.

Seeing, then, that it is most assuredly our Lord's will that we should suffer willingly any cross which may come upon us, either from others or from our own evil deeds, to say, as many do in excuse for their impatience, that God willeth not evil, but abhors it, is a vain pretext, whereby to cover our own faults, and avoid the cross which He wills us to bear.

Nay, I will say further, that supposing all other circumstances the same, our Lord is more pleased with our patient endurance of trials which come upon us from the wickedness of men, especially of those whom we have served and benefited, than with our endurance of other grievous annoyances. And this because our proud nature is, for the most part, more humbled by the former than by the latter; and also because by willingly enduring them we do above measure please and magnify our God, cooperating with Him in that wherein His ineffable goodness and omnipotence shine forth most brightly, namely, in extracting from the deadly poison of malice and wickedness the sweet and precious fruit of holiness and virtue.

No sooner, therefore, does our Lord perceive in us an earnest desire to attempt and persevere in so glorious an undertaking than He prepares for us a chalice of strongest temptation and hardest trial, that we may drink it at the appointed hour; and we, recognising therein His love and our own good, should receive it willingly and blindly, confidently and promptly drinking it to the very dregs, as a medicine compounded by a Hand which cannot err of ingredients the more profitable to

the soul in proportion to their intrinsic bitterness.

CH. XXXIX.—HOW TO AVAIL OURSELVES OF VARIOUS OCCASIONS FOR THE EXERCISE OF A SINGLE VIRTUE.

WE have already seen that it is more profitable to exercise ourselves for a time in a single virtue than in many at once; and that we should use with this view the occasions we meet with, however various. Now learn how to accomplish this with tolerable facility.

It may happen that in the same day, or even in the same hour, we are reprov'd for some thing in which we have done well, or blamed on some other account; we may be harshly refused some favour we have asked,—it may be a mere trifle; we may be unjustly suspected; or we may be called upon to endure some bodily pain, or some petty annoyance, such as a dish badly cooked; or some more heavy affliction, and harder to be borne, such as this wretched life is full of, may befall us.

Though, in the variety of these or similar occurrences, we may perform various acts of virtue, yet, if we would keep to the rule laid down, we shall continue to exercise ourselves in acts wholly conformable to the virtue we have at the time in hand; as, for example:

If, when these occasions present themselves, we are exercising ourselves in patience, we shall endure them all willingly and with a joyful heart.

If our exercise be of humility, we shall in all these little crosses acknowledge ourselves to be deserving of every possible ill.

If of obedience, we shall submit ourselves at once to the almighty hand of God, as well as to all created things, whether rational or even inanimate, which may have caused us these annoyances; and this to please Him, because He has so willed it. If of poverty, we shall be well content to be stripped and robbed of all earthly consolations, whether great or small.

If of charity, we shall produce acts of love towards our neighbour as the instrument of good to us, and towards our Lord God as the first and loving cause whence these annoyances proceed, or by whom they are permitted for our spiritual exercise and improvement.

From what has been said of the various accidents which may befall us daily, we may also learn how, during a single trial of long duration, such as sickness or other like affliction, we may yet continue to produce acts of that virtue in which we are at the time exercising ourselves.

CH. XL.—OF THE TIME TO BE GIVEN TO THE EXERCISE OF EACH SEVERAL VIRTUE, AND OF THE SIGNS OF OUR PROGRESS.

It is not for me to determine the time to be given to the exercise of each several virtue. This must be regulated by the state and necessities of individuals, by the progress they are making in their spiritual course, and by the judgment of their director.

But if we set ourselves faithfully and diligently to work after the manner I have described, there is no doubt but that in a few weeks' time we shall have made no little progress.

It is a sign of advancement in holiness if we persevere in our exercises of virtue amid dryness, darkness, and anguish of spirit, and the withdrawal of spiritual consolation.

Another clear indication will be the degree of resistance made by the senses to the performance of acts of virtue; for the weaker this resistance, the greater will be our progress. When, therefore, we cease to experience any opposition or rebellion in the inferior and sensual part, and more especially in sudden and unexpected assaults, we may look upon it as a sign that we have acquired the virtue.

And the greater the alacrity and joyfulness of spirit which accompanies these acts, the greater may be our hope that we have derived profit from this exercise. We must beware, however, of assuming as a certainty that we have acquired any virtue, or entirely subdued any one passion, even though after a long time, and after many struggles, we may have ceased to feel its motions within us. For here also the arts and devices of Satan and our own deceitful nature may find place, since that which is really vice seems to our lurking pride to be virtue. Besides, if we look to the perfection to which God calls us, we shall hardly persuade ourselves, however great the progress we have made in the way of holiness, that we have even crossed its threshold.

Return, therefore, to thy first exercises, as a young soldier, and a new-born babe, but just beginning to struggle, as if thou hadst hitherto done nothing.

And remember to attend rather to advance-

ment in holiness than to an examination of thy progress ; for the Lord God, the true and only Searcher of our hearts, gives this knowledge to some and withholds it from others, according as He sees that it will lead to pride or to humility ; and as a loving Father He removes a danger from one, while to another He offers an opportunity of increase in holiness. Therefore, although the soul perceive not her progress, let her continue these her exercises ; for she shall see it when it shall please the Lord, for her greater good, to make it known to her.

CH. XLI.—THAT WE MUST NOT YIELD TO THE WISH TO BE DELIVERED FROM THE TRIALS WE ARE PATIENTLY ENDURING, AND HOW WE ARE TO REGULATE ALL OUR DESIRES SO AS TO ADVANCE IN HOLINESS.

WHEN thou shalt find thyself in any painful position, and bearest it patiently, take heed lest the devil or thine own self-love persuade thee to desire deliverance from it ; for thou mayest thereby incur two great evils.

1st. If this desire should not rob thee at once of the virtue of patience, it would at least gradually dispose thee to impatience.

2d. Thy patience would become defective, and would be rewarded by God only according to the duration of the suffering ; whereas if thou hadst not desired to be freed from it, but hadst committed thyself wholly to His Divine goodness, thy sufferings, though but of an hour's duration, or even less, would have been accepted by thy Lord as an enduring service.

In this, then, and in all things, make it thine unvarying rule to keep thy wishes so far

removed from every other object that they may tend simply to their true and only end, the Will of God. For thus will they be ever right and true; and in any cross-accident which may occur, thou wilt be not only tranquil but content, because, as nothing can happen without the Supreme Will, by willing the same thou wilt come at all times both to will all that happens and to possess all that thou desirest.

This must not be understood either of our own sins or those of others, for God wills not these; but it applies to every chastisement arising from them or from any other cause, though it be so keen and searching as to reach the very bottom of the heart, and to wither the very roots of the natural life: a cross where-with God is sometimes pleased to favour His nearest and dearest friends.

And what I say of the patience which thou art bound to practise on all occasions, is to be understood of that portion of any trouble which still remains after we have used all lawful means of relief, and which it is the will of God that we should endure. And in the use of these means we should be guided by the will and disposal of God, who has appointed them to be used, not to please ourselves, but because He so wills; nor as loving or desiring deliverance from suffering beyond what is required for His service and by His will.

**CH. XLII.—HOW TO RESIST THE DEVIL WHEN HE SEEKS TO
DELUDE US BY MEANS OF INDISCREET ZEAL.**

WHEN our cunning adversary perceives that we are walking right onward in the path of holi-

ness with fervent yet well-regulated desires, being unable to draw us aside by open allurements, he transforms himself into an angel of light; and by suggestions of seeming friendship, sentences from Scripture, and examples of saints, importunately urges us to aspire indiscreetly to the height of perfection, that so he may cause us to fall headlong from thence. To this end he encourages us to chastise the body with great severity, by fasts, disciplines, hair-shirts, and other similar mortifications, that he may either tempt us to pride by the thought that we are doing great things,—which is a temptation that especially besets women,—or that we may fall sick, and so be disabled from the exercise of good works; or else that from pain and over-weariness we may take a disgust and abhorrence to spiritual exercises, and thus by degrees grow cold in the way of godliness, and at last give ourselves up with greater avidity than before to worldly pleasures and amusements. This has been the end of many, who, following presumptuously the impulse of an indiscreet zeal, have in their excessive outward austerities gone beyond the measure of their interior virtue; and so have perished in their own inventions, and become the sport of malicious fiends. This would not have befallen them had they well considered what we have been saying, and remembered that these acts of painful self-discipline, praiseworthy as they are and profitable to such as have corresponding strength of body and humility of spirit, must yet be proportioned to each man's state and condition.

And those who are unequal to labour with the saints in similar austerities, may find other opportunities of imitating their lives by strong and effectual desires and fervent prayers, aspiring after the most glorious crown of Christ's true soldier by despising the whole world and themselves also; by giving themselves up to solitude and silence; by meekness and humility towards all men; by patience under wrongs; by doing good to those most opposed to them; and by avoiding every fault, however trivial it may be;—things far more acceptable to God than painful bodily exercises. With regard to these, I would have thee to be rather discreetly sparing, in order to be able, if necessary, to increase them, than by certain excesses of zeal to run the risk of having to relinquish them altogether. I say this to thee, being well assured thou art not likely to fall into the error of those who, though they pass for spiritual, are enticed and deluded by deceitful nature into an over-anxious care for the preservation of their bodily health. So jealous are they, and fearful of the slightest thing which might affect it, that they live in constant doubt and fear of losing it. There is nothing of which they better love to think and speak than of the ordering of their lives in this respect. Hence they are ever solicitous to have food suited rather to their palate than their stomach, which is often weakened by over-delicacy. And though all this is done on the pretext of gaining strength the better to serve God, it is in fact but a vain attempt to conciliate two mortal enemies, the spirit and the

flesh : an attempt which injures both instead of benefiting either ; for this same over-carefulness impairs the health of the one and the devotion of the other.

A certain degree of freedom in our way of life is therefore safer and more profitable ; accompanied, however, by the discretion of which I have spoken, having regard to different constitutions and states of life, which cannot all be brought under the same rule.

In the pursuit of interior holiness, as well as of exterior devotion, we should proceed with moderation, as has been shown before on the subject of the gradual acquisition of virtues.

CH. XLIII.—OF THE TEMPTATION TO FORM RASH JUDGMENTS OF OUR NEIGHBOUR, ARISING FROM THE INSTIGATION OF THE DEVIL AND THE STRENGTH OF OUR OWN EVIL INCLINATIONS, AND OF THE WAY TO RESIST THIS TEMPTATION.

FROM this same vice of self-esteem and self-conceit arises another most injurious to us, i. e. rash judgment of our neighbour, leading us to despise, condemn, and disparage him. And this fault, which arises from our pride and evil inclination, is by the same pride voluntarily nourished and increased ; for as it increases, so does pride also increase, insensibly flattering and deluding us. For the more we presume to exalt ourselves, the more do we unconsciously depress others ; while we imagine ourselves free from those imperfections which we think we perceive in them.

And the cunning tempter, who discovers this most evil disposition in us, is continually on the watch to open our eyes and keep them

awake to see, investigate, and exaggerate the defects of other men. Careless souls know not and believe not how diligently he studies and contrives to impress upon our minds the little failings of this or that person, when he cannot discover to us greater faults.

Therefore, as he is watching to do thee hurt, be thou also awake, lest thou fall into his snare. And when he brings before thee any defect of thy neighbour, banish the thought at once; and if thou still feel a temptation to pass judgment upon it, resist the impulse. Consider that the office of judge has not been committed to thee; and that even if it were, beset as thou art by a thousand passions, and but too prone to think evil without just cause, thou wouldst be unable to form a righteous judgment.

And, as an effectual remedy against rash judgments, I would remind thee to occupy thy thoughts with thine own defects; so wilt thou perceive more and more plainly every hour how much thou hast to do in thyself and for thyself, and wilt find neither time nor inclination to attend to the doings of others.

Besides, by faithfully performing this exercise thou wilt be enabled more and more to purge thine inward sight from the malignant humours whence this pestilent vice proceeds.

And know, that whenever thou art so unhappy as to think any evil of thy brother, then is some root of the same evil in thine own heart; which, in proportion as it is ill-disposed itself, gives a ready welcome to any thing like itself.

Whenever, therefore, it comes into thy mind to judge another for some fault, despise thine own self as guilty of the same, and say in thine heart, "How can a wretch like me, laden with this and far worse faults, dare to lift up my head to see and judge the faults of others?"

And thus will the weapon, which, directed against another, would have wounded thee, being turned against thyself, bring healing to thy wounds.

If the error committed be clear and manifest, find some compassionate excuse for it, and believe that in thy brother are some hidden virtues, for the sake of which the Lord has suffered him to fall, or to be for some time subject to this failing, that he may become vile in his own sight; and that, being also despised by others on this account, he may reap the fruit of humiliation, and render himself more acceptable to God, and so his gain may become greater than his loss.

But if the sin be not only manifest, but grievous and wilfully obstinate, turn thy thoughts upon God's awful judgments. Then thou wilt see men who were once great sinners attaining high degrees of sanctity; and others, who seemed to have reached the sublimest heights of perfection, falling into the lowest depths of perdition.

Therefore fear and tremble for thyself far more than for any other.

And be assured, that every good and kindly feeling towards thy neighbour is the gift of the Holy Ghost; and that all rash judgment, all contempt and bitterness towards him, flow

from our own evil hearts and the suggestions of Satan.

If, then, any imperfection of another have made an impression on thy mind, rest not nor give slumber to thine eyes until to the utmost of thy power thou hast effaced it from thine heart.

CH. XLIV.—ON PRAYER.

IF self-distrust, trust in God, and spiritual exercises, be so needful, as has been already shown, in this conflict, needful above all is prayer (the fourth weapon above mentioned) by means of which we may obtain from the Lord our God not these alone, but all other good things.

For prayer is the instrument for obtaining all the graces which flow down upon us from that Divine Source of love and goodness.

By prayer, well used, thou wilt put a sword into the hand of God wherewith to fight and conquer for thee.

And to use it well, thou must be well exercised in the following practices, or be striving to become so.

1. Thou must have an earnest desire to serve His Divine Majesty in all things, in the way most acceptable to Him.

In order to enkindle this desire, consider well that God is supremely worthy to be served and honoured for His supreme excellencies, His wisdom, goodness, majesty, beauty, and all His other infinite perfections. That to serve thee He laboured and suffered for three-and-thirty years; binding up and healing the putrefying

sores envenomed by the poison of sin, not with oil, or wine, or linen, but with the precious stream that flowed from His most sacred veins, and with His most pure flesh torn by scourges, thorns, and nails.

And consider further the great value of this service. By it we gain the mastery over Satan and ourselves, and are made the children of God Himself.

2. Thou must have a lively faith and confidence that the Lord will give thee all things needful for His service and thy good.

This holy confidence is the vessel which Divine mercy fills with the treasures of His grace; and the larger and more capacious it is, the more richly laden will our prayer return into our bosom. For how shall the almighty and unchanging God fail to impart to us His gifts, when He has Himself commanded us to ask for them; promising, also, to give us His Spirit, if we ask with faith and perseverance?

3. When thou prayest, let it be thy intention to will God's will alone, and not thine own, as well in asking as in obtaining; that is, pray because God wills thee to pray, and desire to be heard in so far and no farther than He wills. Thy intention, in short, should be to unite thy will to the will of God, and not to draw His will to thine.

And this because thy will, being infected and ruined by self-love, often errs, and knows not what to ask; but the Divine Will, being always united to ineffable goodness, can never err.

The will of God is, therefore, the rule and

ruler of all other wills ; and it deserves and wills to be followed and obeyed by all.

Ask, therefore, always such things as are conformable to God's will ; and if thou be in doubt whether any thing be so or not, ask it on the condition of its being according to the will of God.

And those things (such as all virtues) which thou certainly knowest to be agreeable to Him, ask rather in order to serve and please Him thereby than for any other motive, how spiritual soever.

4. Be careful when thou goest to prayer to adorn thyself with works corresponding to thy petitions ; and after thou hast prayed, labour more earnestly still to fit thyself for the grace and virtue thou desirest to obtain.

For the exercise of prayer must be so continually accompanied by the exercise of self-discipline, that the one may involve the other ; else, to pray for a virtue and take no trouble to obtain it, would be rather to tempt God than to serve Him.

5. Let thy petitions be ordinarily preceded by thanksgiving for previous mercies, in the following or similar forms :

“ O Lord, who of Thy goodness hast created and redeemed me, and on so many and numberless occasions, unknown to me, hast delivered me out of the hands of my enemies ; help me now, and refuse not my petitions, though I have been ever rebellious and ungrateful to Thee.”

And if, while thou art praying for any particular virtue, some painful occasion for its exer-

cise should present itself, fail not to return thanks to God for the opportunity thus afforded thee, which is no small token of His loving-kindness.

6. As prayer derives its efficacy and its power of propitiating God and inclining Him to our desires from the goodness and mercifulness of His own nature, from the merits of the life and passion of His only-begotten Son, and from His promise to hear us, conclude thy petitions with one or more of the following sentences :

“Of Thy great mercy, O Lord, grant me Thy grace. May the merits of Thy Son obtain for me my petition. Remember Thy promises, O my God, and incline Thine ear to my prayer.”

And at other times ask for graces through the merits of the Virgin Mary and the Saints, who have great power with God, and are greatly honoured by Him, because in this life they greatly honoured His Divine Majesty.

Continue perseveringly in prayer; for humble perseverance vanquishes the invincible. And if the importunity of the widow in the Gospel inclined to her request the unjust judge laden with iniquity, shall a like perseverance fail to incline to our petitions that God who is Himself the plenitude of goodness ?

And although the Lord should delay to hear, and even seem to reject thy prayer, pray on still, and still hold fast a firm and lively confidence in His aid; for in Him there is no lack, but an infinite superabundance of all things needful for the grace we ask.

Therefore, unless there be some fault on thy

part, thou mayest rest assured either of obtaining all thy petition, or something which will be more profitable for thee, or, it may be, both together ; and the more He seems to repulse thee, the more do thou humble thyself in thine own sight, considering thy own demerits, and fixing thine eyes stedfastly on the mercy of God. Establish thus more and more thy confidence in Him, which will be most acceptable to thy Lord, if thou maintain it more lively and entire the more it is assailed. Lastly, give thanks always to God, acknowledging Him to be no less good, and wise, and loving, when some things are denied, than if all were granted thee. Happen what may, do thou remain ever steadfast and joyful in humble submission to His Divine Providence.

CH. XLV.—WHAT CONSTITUTES MENTAL PRAYER.

MENTAL prayer is the lifting up of our heart to God in actual or virtual supplication for any thing we desire.

It is actual when we mentally put our petition into words, such as these, or others of a like kind :

“ O Lord God, grant me this grace for Thine honour ;” or, “ O Lord, I believe it to be according to Thy will and for Thy glory that I should ask and receive this grace of Thee ; fulfil, then, now Thy Divine will in me.”

And when actually assailed by enemies, say thus : “ Be Thou at hand, O God, to help me, that I yield not to mine enemies ;” or, “ My God, my Refuge, the Strength of my heart, help me speedily, lest I fall.”

And continue thus to pray as long as the conflict lasts, manfully resisting thine adversary all the while.

When the heat of the battle is over, turn to thy Lord, and present before Him the enemy who has been attacking thee, and thine own inability to resist him, saying: "Behold, Lord, the creature of Thy bounty, the work of Thy hand, redeemed by Thy blood. Behold Thine enemy, who strives to wrest it from Thee and devour it. To Thee, my Lord, do I fly, in Thee alone do I trust, who art all-powerful and all-good, and who seest my weakness, and my proneness without Thee to become a willing captive; help me, then, my Hope, and the Strength of my heart."

By virtual supplication, I mean the lifting up the heart to God to obtain some grace; simply showing Him our need, without further speech or discourse. As when I lift up my heart to God, and then in His presence own myself helpless, unable to defend myself from any evil, or of myself to do any good, but inflamed with a desire to serve Him humbly and faithfully; and so, awaiting His aid, I behold and contemplate Him in silence.

Such an acknowledgment, enkindled with ardent desire and faith, is in the sight of God a prayer which *virtually* asks for what I need; and the more simple and sincere the acknowledgment, the more ardent the desire, the more lively the faith, the more efficacious will be the prayer.

There is another and briefer kind of virtual prayer, which consists in a mere glance of the

mind to God imploring His aid, which glance is a silent remembrancer and supplication for the grace which we have asked before.

Thou shouldst diligently learn this kind of prayer, and accustom thyself to its use, because, as experience will show thee, it is a weapon of unspeakable value, which thou mayest have at hand to aid thee at all times and on all occasions.

CH. XLVI.—OF MEDITATION.

BEING desirous to spend some space of time in prayer, whether half an hour, or a still longer time, thou wilt add to prayer a meditation on the life and passion of Jesus Christ, applying His actions on each occasion to the virtue which thou seekest to obtain.

Thus, to obtain the grace of patience, take for the subject of thy meditation some points in the mystery of the scourging.

1. That, after the command given by Pilate, our Lord was dragged by the ministers of iniquity to the place appointed for His scourging.

2. That He was stripped with headlong fury, so that His most pure flesh was left naked and exposed.

3. That His innocent hands were bound with hard cords, and made fast to the pillar.

4. That His body was so torn and lacerated with scourges, that His sacred blood flowed down to the ground.

5. That, by repeated stripes on the same place, the anguish of the wounds already inflicted was still increased.

In order, then, to acquire the grace of pa-

tience, having first proposed to thyself these or similar subjects of meditation, apply thy senses to feel in the highest possible degree the intense agony and most acute pain which thy dear Lord endured throughout His most sacred body, and in every part of it at once.

Thence pass on to His most holy soul, and strive to enter as far as possible into the patience and meekness with which He endured all these agonies, which yet were insufficient to satisfy His longing desire to suffer even greater and more excruciating tortures for our good and His Father's honour.

Behold Him next inflamed with an ardent desire that thou shouldst bear thy trouble willingly, and see how He still turns to the Father, and prays for thee, that He would give thee grace patiently to bear that cross which is now tormenting thee, and any other which may hereafter be laid upon thee.

Bow thy will, then, to suffer all with a patient spirit; and then, turning to the Eternal Father, thank Him that of His pure charity He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to bear such bitter anguish, and to intercede for thee; and ask Him, for the sake and through the intercession of this His beloved Son, to bestow on thee the grace of patience.

CH. XLVII.—OF ANOTHER METHOD OF MEDITATION.

THERE is another way in which thou mayest pray and meditate.

After well considering the sorrows of our Lord, and meditating upon the willingness with which He endured them, pass on from

the greatness of His sufferings, and the greatness of His patience, to two other considerations:

The one, of His merit.

The other, of the glory and satisfaction derived by the Eternal Father from the perfect obedience of His Son in His passion.

And representing these two things to His Divine Majesty, ask, in virtue of them, the grace which thou desirest.

And thou mayest do this, not only in each mystery of our Lord's Passion, but in each particular act, whether interior or exterior, of each mystery.

CH. XLVIII.—A METHOD OF PRAYER THROUGH THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

THERE is another way of meditating, by means of the Blessed Virgin Mary, turning our thoughts first to the Eternal God, next to the sweet Jesus, and lastly, to His most glorious Mother.

Turning first to God, consider two things—

1. The satisfaction which, from all eternity, He took in Himself, reflected, as it were, in Mary, before He had drawn her being out of nothingness; 2. Her actions and virtues after she came into the world.

Meditate thus upon the first point :

Raising thy thoughts above all creatures, and entering into the very eternity and mind of God, consider the delight which He took in Mary; and for her sake ask confidently grace and strength for the destruction of thine enemies, and particularly of that with which thou

art now contending. Then, passing on to the consideration of the numberless and singular virtues and actions of that most holy Mother, and presenting them before God, now severally, now all together, ask in virtue of them whatsoever thou desirest of God's infinite bounty.

Then turn again to the Son, and remind Him of the virginal womb in which He was borne for nine long months ; of the reverence with which, after He was born, the Blessed Virgin adored Him, acknowledging Him to be true God and true man, her Creator and her Son ; the pitiful eyes with which she looked upon Him in His poverty ; the arms which received Him ; the loving kisses with which she caressed Him ; the breasts which nourished Him ; and the labour and sorrow which, in life and death, she endured for Him. By virtue of all these things, thou wilt do loving violence to the Divine Son until He hear thee.

Lastly, turn to the most holy Virgin, and remind her that she has been chosen by the Eternal Providence and Goodness to be our advocate, and the mother of grace and pity ; so that, next to her blessed Son, we can have no surer refuge. And remind her of that truth which has been written of her, and which has been many and many times so miraculously proved, that no one ever invoked her in faith, to whom she vouchsafed not a gracious answer. Lastly, place before her all the labours which her only Son endured for our salvation ; beseech her to obtain for thee grace from Him, that they may produce in thee the effect for

which He endured them, to His glory and good pleasure.

CH. XLIX.—OF SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY MOVE US TO HAVE RECOURSE WITH FAITH AND CONFIDENCE TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

WOULDEST thou have recourse, then, with faith and confidence to the Blessed Virgin in all thy necessities, thou mayest encourage thyself by the following considerations :

1st. Thou knowest by experience that a vessel in which musk or any precious liquid has been preserved retains much of the scent even when empty ; and the longer the liquid has been kept in it, the stronger the scent which remains. Yet the virtue of the musk, or any other liquid, is limited or finite. And so, if we stand near a large fire, we retain the heat for some time after we leave it.

Now, if this be so, with what a fire of charity, with what a fulness of mercy and pity, must the bosom of the blessed Mary have been kindled and filled ! For nine months did she bear in her virginal womb, for ever does she bear in her heart and her love, Him who is essential charity, mercy, and pity, not in a finite and limited measure, but infinite and boundless. So that, as he who approaches a great fire cannot but receive a portion of its heat, much more shall every sufferer who approaches that fire of charity, mercy, and pity, which burns perpetually in the heart of Mary, receive succour, favour, and grace ; and this the more, the oftener they come, and the greater the faith and confidence they bring with them.

2d. No creature ever so ardently loved Jesus Christ, or was so perfectly conformed to His will, as His most holy Mother. If, then, the Son of God Himself, who gave all His life and all Himself for us poor sinners, has given His Mother to be our mother and advocate, in order that she may aid us, and be next after Himself the means of our salvation, how can this mother and advocate ever fail us, and thus become disobedient to the will of her Son ?

Have recourse, then, with confidence to the most holy Virgin Mary ; for this confidence is most blessed, and she is a most sure refuge to all who fly to her, and a never-failing source of graces and gifts.

CH. L.—OF MEDITATION ON THE ANGELS AND SAINTS.

THERE are two ways of obtaining the help and favour of the angels and saints in heaven.

The one is, to represent to the Eternal Father the love and praises rendered to Him by all the heavenly court, and the labours and pains which the saints have suffered on earth for His love ; and in virtue of these to ask of His Divine Majesty all that thou needest.

The other is, to have recourse to those glorious spirits, as to those who not only desire our perfection, but even to see us exalted above themselves ; asking their aid against every enemy and every sin, and praying them to defend thee in the hour of death.

And at other times thou wilt consider the many and singular graces which they have received from their Creator. exciting in thyself lively affections of love and joy to see them

enriched with so many gifts, as if all those gifts were thine own. Nay, if possible, thou shouldst rejoice that they, and not thou, have been thus endowed, since such was the will of God, to whom thou shouldst therefore offer thanks and praise. And in order to perform this exercise with facility, thou mayest divide the company of the blessed into seven divisions, answering to the seven days of the week.

On Sunday thou wilt take the nine choirs of angels : on Monday, St. John the Baptist : on Tuesday, the Patriarchs and Prophets : on Wednesday, the Apostles : on Thursday, the Martyrs : on Friday, the Pontiffs and other saints : on Saturday, the virgins and other holy women. But omit not on any day to have frequent recourse to the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of all saints, to thy guardian angel, to St. Michael the Archangel, and all thy holy advocates.

And daily implore the Blessed Virgin, her Son, and the Eternal Father, that they would grant thee this grace to have for thy principal advocate and protector St. Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin ; beseeching him with all confidence to receive thee under his protection. Many wonderful things are told us of this glorious saint, and many favours, both temporal and spiritual, have been received by those who have applied to him with reverence and devotion—especially direction how to pray and meditate devoutly. For if God makes great account of the other saints, because while dwelling among us they rendered honour and obedience unto Him, what must we believe to

be the power with Him of that most humble and blessed saint, whom He Himself so honoured upon earth as to be subject to him as to a father and humbly obey him !

CH. LI.—OF MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST IN ORDER TO EXCITE VARIOUS AFFECTIONS THEREBY.

WHAT has been said above of the Passion of our Lord will serve for prayer and supplication. I will now add something which may assist thee in exciting various affections thereby. Thou wouldst meditate, for example, on the crucifixion. In this mystery thou mayest dwell upon the following points among others :

1. How, when our Lord was cruelly stripped by those furious men upon Mount Calvary, His flesh was lacerated by the tearing off of His garments, which cleaved to the wounds inflicted by the scourge.

2. How the crown of thorns, having been taken off His head, and again pressed down upon it, wounded Him afresh.

3. How with repeated blows of the hammer He was cruelly nailed to the cross.

4. How, when His sacred limbs could not reach the holes made to receive the nails, they were so violently stretched by those cruel wretches that the dislocated bones might all be numbered.

5. How, as the Lord hung upon the hard wood, supported only by the nails, the weight of His body enlarged His most sacred wounds, and aggravated their unspeakable agony.

Desiring, then, to excite in thyself the affection of love, endeavour, by meditation on these

or other points, to pass on to a deeper knowledge of thy Lord's infinite love and goodness towards thee, who for thy sake was pleased to suffer so much. For the more thou dost advance in this knowledge, the more will thy love increase.

And this knowledge of thy Lord's infinite love and goodness will easily lead thee to sorrow and contrition for having so often and so ungratefully offended thy God, who was thus for thine iniquities in so many ways tortured and ill-treated.

To excite thyself to hope, consider, that into this state of extreme misery did this mighty Lord descend that He might abolish sin, and deliver thee from the snares of the devil and the bondage of thine own especial faults; that He might propitiate His Eternal Father in thy behalf, and give thee confidence to apply to Him in all thy necessities.

Joy will be excited by passing from these sufferings to their effects, and considering that by these the sins of the whole world are purged away, the Father's wrath is appeased, the prince of darkness confounded, death slain, and the angelic ranks again filled up.

Thou wilt be further moved to gladness by the joy derived therefrom by the Most Holy Trinity, together with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church militant and triumphant.

To excite in thyself a hatred of sin, apply each point of thy meditation to this end alone; as if our Lord had suffered for this purpose only, to teach thee to hate thine evil inclinations, and especially that which has the great-

est power over thee, and is most displeasing to His divine goodness.

To move thee to admiration, consider what greater marvel could there be than to behold the Creator of the universe, who giveth life to all things, persecuted to death by His creatures; the Supreme Majesty trampled upon and despised; justice condemned; the beauty of God spit upon; the love of the Eternal Father hated; that interior and inaccessible light brought under the power of darkness; essential blessedness and glory accounted the disgrace and scandal of mankind, and overwhelmed in extremity of misery.

To arouse thyself to compassion for thy suffering Lord, besides meditating upon His exterior pains fix thy thoughts upon those incomparably greater agonies which tortured His soul. For if the former afflict thee, it is a marvel that thy heart breaks not with anguish at the thought of the latter.

The soul of Christ beheld the Divine Essence as it now beholds It in heaven. He knew It, therefore, to be beyond all measure worthy of all honour and worship; and in His unspeakable love towards It, desired that all creatures should employ all their powers therein.

To see It, then, on the contrary, so strangely outraged and dishonoured by the innumerable sins and abominable wickedness of men pierced Him with infinite darts of sorrow, which tortured Him in proportion to the greatness of His love, and the intensity of His desire that all men should honour and obey so exalted a majesty.

And as the greatness of this love and this desire surpasses our conception, so can we never know how heavy and how bitter was the sorrow of our crucified Lord on this account.

Furthermore, as He loved all His creatures with unspeakable love, so in proportion to that love did He grieve beyond measure for all the sins which were separating them from Him. He grieved for every mortal sin which ever had been or ever should be committed by all men who had ever lived or ever should live upon the earth; for every such sin, whensoever committed, separates the soul of the sinner from the soul of the Lord, to which it was united by charity.

A separation so much the more painful than that of the members of the body when torn from their natural place, as the soul, being a pure spirit, and more perfect and noble than the body, is therefore more capable of suffering.

Amidst all these sufferings for His creatures, the bitterest was that which our Lord endured on account of all the sins of the damned, who, being never more to be united to Him, were doomed to eternal and incomparable torments.

And if the soul, touched by these sufferings of her beloved Jesus, will enter still more deeply into the contemplation of them, she will find but too ample cause for compassion, in the heavy sorrow endured by Him, not only for sins then actually committed, but also for the sins that would afterwards be committed.

For, without doubt, both the pardon of the former, and preservation from the latter, have

been purchased for us by our Lord at the price of His precious passion.

Nor will other considerations be wanting to bring thee to sympathise with thy crucified Saviour.

For no sorrow of any kind ever was or ever will be endured by any rational creature whatsoever, which He, in His own person, did not vouchsafe to endure.

Insult, temptation, infamy ; every pain and every sorrow of each one of the whole race of man,—all these agonised the soul of Christ more intensely than the souls of those who before or after suffered them.

For every one of their afflictions, whether small or great, of body or of mind, even to a slight headache or a needle's prick, was perfectly seen by our most pitiful Lord, who of His boundless charity was pleased to compassionate them, and to engrave them on His Heart.

But who can express His anguish of spirit at the sorrow of His most holy Mother ? For in every respect and in every way in which the Lord sorrowed and suffered did the holy Virgin suffer and sorrow most bitterly, though less intensely than He.

And these her sorrows opened afresh the interior wounds of her Blessed Son. These, like so many fiery darts of love, pierced His most loving Heart, which, by reason of these tortures, and others unknown, yet infinite in number, may be well described, as a devout soul was wont in simplicity to call it, "a loving hell of voluntary pains."

Consider well the cause of all this anguish endured by our crucified Lord and Redeemer, and thou wilt find none other but only sin.

Hence it plainly follows that the chief and true tokens of sympathy and gratitude, which we are unspeakably bound to render to Him, are these: to mourn over our offences purely for His love, to hate sin with a deadly hatred, and to combat manfully against all His enemies and our own evil inclinations, that so, putting off the old man with his deeds, we may put on the new, and adorn our souls with evangelical virtues.

**CH. LII.—OF THE BENEFIT TO BE DERIVED FROM MEDITATION
ON THE CRUCIFIXION OF OUR LORD, AND OF THE IMITATION
OF HIS VIRTUES.**

AMONG the other benefits, which are many, to be derived from this holy meditation, the first is, not only to sorrow over thy past sins, but also to afflict thyself for the disorderly passions still alive within thee, which nailed thy Lord to the cross.

The second, to ask pardon for thy sins, and grace to loathe thyself, that thou mayest never more offend Him; but, in return for all His sufferings for thee, love and serve Him with perfection; which, without this holy hatred of self, thou wilt never be able to do.

The third, to pursue effectually to death every one of thy evil inclinations, how trifling soever it may be.

The fourth, to strive with all thy might to imitate the virtues of thy Saviour, who suffered, not only to redeem us by making atone-

ment for our iniquities, but also to set us an example that we should follow His holy steps.

And here I will propose to thee a method of meditation which may serve to that end.

If thou desirest, therefore, to acquire the virtue of patience, in imitation of Christ thy Lord, consider the following points:

1st. How the soul of Christ crucified acted towards God.

2d. How God acted towards the soul of Christ.

3d. How the soul of Christ acted towards itself, and towards His most holy body.

4th. How Christ acted towards us.

5th. How we should act towards Christ.

1st. Consider how the soul of Christ, being wholly intent upon God, marvelled to see that infinite, incomprehensible greatness, in comparison with which all created things are as a mere nothing, still abiding immutable in its glory, subjected to endure on earth the most unworthy treatment from man, who has never made it any return but unfaithfulness and insult. Consider how His soul adored God, gave Him thanks, and offered itself wholly to Him.

2d. Behold attentively how God acted towards the soul of Christ; how He willed and urged it to endure for our sake buffetings, spitings, blasphemies, scourgings, thorns, and finally the cross, making known to it His pleasure to see it laden with every kind of pain and ignominy.

3d. Pass hence to the soul of Christ, and think how it perceived by its understanding, which is essential light, how great was this

good pleasure of God ; and with its affection, which is essential fire, it loved the Divine Majesty with a boundless love, both for His infinite merit, and because of its infinite obligations unto Him. And how, being thus called by Him to suffer for love of us and for our example, it disposed itself promptly, willingly, and joyfully, to obey His most holy will. And who can penetrate the ardent longing for suffering which now sprang up in that most pure and most loving soul? Henceforth it dwelt, as it were, in a labyrinth of sorrows, ever seeking, yet never finding, new ways and modes enough of suffering to satisfy its desire. Yet did it freely give itself wholly, and its most innocent flesh, as a prey to wicked men and the demons of hell, to be dealt with at their pleasure.

4th. Then look upon thy Jesus, as He turns His pitying eyes on thee and says, " Behold, My child, whither thy unbridled wishes have carried Me, because thou wouldst not do a little violence to thyself. Behold how much and how joyfully I suffer for thy love, and to set thee an example of true patience. By all My agonies, I beseech thee to bear willingly this cross, and every other which it may please Me to lay upon thee ; leaving thyself wholly in the hands of all the persecutors to whom I shall commit thee, however vile they be, and however cruelly set against thine honour and thy life. O, didst thou but know the consolation this will give Me ! But thou mayest see it in these wounds, which I was pleased to receive as costly jewels, in order to adorn

with precious virtues that poor soul of thine, which is dearer to Me than thou hast power to conceive. And if on this account I have reduced Myself to such extremity, wilt thou, beloved spouse, refuse to suffer some little thing in order to satisfy My Heart, and allay the anguish of those wounds inflicted by thine impatience, which grieves Me far more bitterly than the wounds themselves ?”

5th. Next think well who it is that thus talks with thee, and thou wilt see that it is Christ Himself, the King of Glory, true God and true man. Consider the greatness of His torments, and His ignominy, which would have exceeded the deserts of the vilest criminal. Behold thy Lord, not only unmoved and marvellously patient under all these indignities, but even rejoicing as at His bridal ; and as a little water serves but to increase a flame, so with the increase of agonies, which to His overflowing charity seemed little, did His joy in them increase, and His desire to suffer even greater things than these. Consider that thy most merciful Lord did and suffered all this, not of necessity, nor for any advantage to Himself, but, as He has told thee, out of His charity for thee, and to teach thee to exercise thyself after His example in the virtue of patience. Enter, then, deeply into all that He desires of thee, and the consolation thou wilt afford Him by the exercise of this virtue ; and make acts of ardent desire to bear, not with patience only, but with joy, thy present cross, and all others, be they heavier still, the more perfectly to imitate thy God, and the better to console Him.

Set before thee the shame and anguish which He endured for thee, together with His patience and constancy, and thou wilt be ashamed to call thy patience even the very shadow of that virtue, or to account thy sorrows and thy shame realities. And fear and tremble lest perchance the slightest thought of unwillingness to suffer for the love of thy Lord find even a momentary resting-place in thy heart.

This crucified Lord is the book which I give thee to read, that from it thou mayest copy the true picture of every virtue. For it is the book of life, which not only instructs the understanding by words, but enkindles the will by its living example.

The world is full of books; and yet, were they all put together, they could not teach us so perfectly how to acquire all virtues as this contemplation of God crucified.

And know this that they who spend hours in weeping over our Lord's passion, and meditating on His patience, and yet, when troubles overtake them, are as impatient as if they had learned quite another lesson in their prayer, are like soldiers who promise themselves great things in their tent before the hour of battle, and on the first appearance of the enemy throw down their arms and take to flight. What can be more miserable and more foolish than thus to see, as in a mirror, the virtues of the Lord, to love and admire them, and yet when an occasion offers of exercising ourselves therein, wholly to forget and disregard the lesson ?

CH. LIII.—OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.

THUS far I have, as thou hast seen, provided thee with four necessary weapons wherewith to overcome thine enemies, and with many directions how to use them well. I have one more to offer thee—the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

And, inasmuch as this sacrament is above all other sacraments, so is this fifth weapon superior to all the rest.

The four above enumerated derive their value from the merits and grace purchased for us by the blood of Christ; but this weapon is His very flesh and blood, together with His soul and His divinity.

In those we fight against our enemies in the strength of Christ. In this we fight against them together with Christ Himself; and Christ Himself fights against them together with us. For he who eats the flesh of Christ and drinks His blood, dwells in Christ and Christ in him.

And seeing that this weapon, even this most holy sacrament, may be taken and used in two ways, *i. e.* sacramentally once every day, and spiritually every hour and every moment, neglect not to receive it very frequently in the second way, and as often as thou art permitted in the first.

CH. LIV.—OF THE MANNER IN WHICH WE OUGHT TO RECEIVE THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.

WE may approach this most divine sacrament for various ends, in order to which there are various things to be done, which may be divided into three periods :

Before Communion.

When we are about to communicate.

And after Communion.

Before Communion : Whatever be our object in communicating, we must, if stained with mortal sin, cleanse and purify ourselves in the sacrament of penance. And with the whole affection of our heart, we must give our whole self, with all our soul, all our strength, and all our powers, to Jesus Christ and to His good pleasure, since in this most holy sacrament He gives us His blood and His flesh, with His soul, His divinity, and all His merits. And considering that our gift is little, nay, nothing in comparison with His, we should desire to have all that has ever been offered and given to Him by all His creatures in heaven or on earth, that we might present it to His divine Majesty.

Or wouldst thou communicate in order to overcome and destroy within thee His enemies and thine own? Begin, in this case, on the eve of thy communion, or before, to meditate on the desire of the Son of God that, in this most holy sacrament, thou shouldst give Him a place in thine heart, that He may unite Himself to thee and aid thee to overcome all thine evil passions. So great and unbounded is this desire of our Lord, that no created intellect is capable of comprehending it.

But in order that thou mayest be able in some small measure to apprehend it, there are two things to be deeply impressed on thy mind.

One is, the ineffable pleasure which the all-

bountiful God takes in dwelling with us ; for He calls it His delight.

The other, His supreme hatred of sin, both as an obstacle and impediment to that union of Himself with us which He so ardently desires, and also as being so utterly opposed to His divine perfections. For being Himself supreme goodness, pure light, and infinite beauty, He cannot but infinitely hate sin, which is nothing else but darkness, the defect and intolerable stain of our souls.

So burning, indeed, is this hatred of the Lord against sin, that the whole dispensation of the Old and New Testament has been ordained for its destruction ; and above all, the mystery of the most holy passion of His Son, who, as some of His most enlightened servants have said, would, if needful, have exposed Himself to a thousand deaths to annihilate within us even the smallest of our faults.

These considerations will enable thee, though very imperfectly, to comprehend how earnestly thy Lord desires to gain an entrance into thy heart, in order to banish thence and to subdue all His enemies and thine ; and so thou wilt be excited to an earnest desire, on thy part, to receive Him for the same end.

Thus encouraged, and inspired by the hope that thy heavenly Captain will come to thine aid, challenge frequently to battle the passion which thou hast undertaken to subdue, and repress it by a constant and determined hostility ; making, at the same time, acts of the contrary virtue, and continue to do this also on the mornng of holy Communion.

Again, when about to receive the most holy Communion, review briefly all the faults which, since thy last communion, thou hast committed with as much heedless levity as though God were not in existence, nor had endured so much for thee in the mysteries of the cross, making more account of a base indulgence of thine own wishes than of God's will or God's honour; and so wilt thou be penetrated with deep shame and holy fear at thine own unworthiness and ingratitude.

But reflecting again that the unfathomable deep of thy Lord's goodness calls to the deep of thine ingratitude and infidelity, draw near to Him with confidence, giving Him a large place in thy heart, that He may take absolute possession of it. And this thou wilt do when thou hast driven thence all affection to creatures, closing it fast, that none may enter but thy Lord alone.

After communion, retire immediately into the hidden sanctuary of thy heart; and, having first adored Him, then with all humility and reverence converse thus in spirit with thy Lord:

"Thou seest, O my only Good, how prone I am to offend Thee, and what dominion this passion has over me, and that of myself I have no power to set myself free. The battle, then, is chiefly Thine, and from Thee alone do I hope for victory, though I must needs do my part in the conflict."

Then turn to the Eternal Father, and offer to Him His blessed Son, whom He hath given thee, and whom thou hast now within thee, as a thank-offering. and to obtain the victory

over thyself. Then make a vigorous assault upon this passion, looking in faith to God for the victory, who, though He may seem to delay for a while, will never fail thee, if, on thy part, thou wilt do what is in thy power.

CH. LV.—HOW WE SHOULD PREPARE OURSELVES FOR COMMUNION IN ORDER TO EXCITE WITHIN US THE LOVE OF GOD.

IN order to excite thyself to the love of God by means of this super-celestial sacrament, meditate on the preceding evening upon His love to thee.

That this great and almighty Lord was not content with creating thee to His own image and likeness, and sending His only-begotten Son to suffer for thy iniquities for three-and-thirty years, and to endure the bitterest sorrows and the painful death of the cross for thy redemption, but has been pleased also to leave Him with thee for thy nourishment in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

Consider well the inconceivable excellency of this love, which is perfect and unparalleled in all respects.

1st. In its duration : our God has loved us unceasingly and from all eternity ; and as He is eternal in His divinity, so is He in His love, whereby, before all worlds, He determined within Himself to give us His Son in this marvellous manner. Say, then, to thyself with interior joy, “ In that abyss of eternity my littleness was so loved and prized by the most high God, that He thought of me, and with love unspeakable desired to give me His Son to be my food.”

2d. All other love, how great soever, has some boundary which it may not pass ; but this love of our Lord is immeasurable. In order, therefore, fully to satisfy it He has given His own Son, in majesty and infinity equal to Himself and of the same substance and nature. The love, then, is as great as the gift, and the gift as great as the love, and both so great that nothing greater is conceivable.

3d. Neither was God drawn to love us by any force or necessity ; but His intrinsic natural goodness alone moved Him to such a great and incomprehensible love towards us.

4th. Neither could any previous good work or desert of ours have induced this mighty Lord to manifest such excess of love towards our misery ; but of His free bounty alone has He given Himself wholly to us, His most unworthy creatures.

5th. Consider the purity of this love, and thou wilt see that it is not, like worldly love, mingled with aught of self-interest. For the Lord needs not any thing of ours, being without us most blessed and most glorious in Himself alone ; and He pours forth His unspeakable love and bounty upon us solely for our benefit, and not for His.

Meditating deeply upon this truth, say in thine heart, " How is it that so mighty a Lord sets His heart upon so vile a creature ? What wouldst Thou, O King of Glory ? What dost Thou look for from me, who am but dust ? I see well, O my God, by the light of Thy burning charity, that Thou hast but one design, which reveals to me most plainly the

purity of Thy love to me. For to this end only dost Thou give me Thy whole self to be my nourishment, that I may be wholly changed into Thee ; and this not because Thou hast any need of me, but that, Thou living in me and I in Thee, I may by a loving union be changed into Thee, and that the vileness of my earthly heart may be united to Thine, so as to form with it one only Divine Heart."

Then, full of joy and wonder to behold thyself so highly prized and loved by God, and understanding that the only design of this His omnipotent love is to draw all thy love to Himself, withdraw thyself from all creatures, and from thyself also as being a creature, and offer thyself as a holocaust to thy Lord, that His love and His divine pleasure alone may henceforth guide thine understanding, thy memory, and thy will, and regulate all thy senses. And then, perceiving that nothing has such power to produce these divine effects within thee as the worthy reception of Him in the most holy sacrament of the altar, open thy heart to Him in the following ejaculations and loving aspirations :

"O supercelestial Food ! when will the time come when I shall wholly sacrifice myself to Thee in the fire of Thy love ? When, when, O uncreated Love ?

"O living Bread ! when shall I live by Thee alone, for Thee alone, and to Thee alone ? When shall this be, O my Life,—Life blessed, beautiful, and eternal ?

"O heavenly Manna ! when shall I, loathing all other food, desire Thee alone,—feed on

Thee alone ! When shall this be, O my Delight, my only Good ? O my loving and almighty Lord ! free now this wretched heart from every attachment, and from every vicious passion ; adorn it with Thy holy virtues, and with a pure intention of doing all things to please Thee, that so I may open it to Thee, and invite and with gentle violence compel Thee to come in, that Thou, O Lord, mayest work therein without resistance all those effects which from all eternity Thou hast desired to produce in me."

In such loving affections thou mayest exercise thyself in the evening and the morning preparatory to communion. Then, as the time of communion approaches, think Whom thou art about to receive.

The Son of God, of majesty incomprehensible, before whom the heavens and all the powers therein do tremble—the Holy of Holies, the spotless Mirror, and the incomprehensible Purity, beside whom no creature is clean ;—He who, as a very worm and the outcast of the people, was pleased for love of thee to be rejected, trampled upon, mocked, spit upon, and crucified by the malice and wickedness of men. Thou art, I say, about to receive God, in whose hand are the life and death of the whole universe.

Think, on the other hand, that of thyself thou art nothing, and that by thy sin and wickedness thou hast made thyself lower than the vilest and most impure of irrational creatures, and worthy to be the sport and mockery of all the devils in hell.

That instead of being thankful for such immense and innumerable benefits, thou hast, in thy caprice and wilfulness, despised this mighty and loving Lord, and trampled upon His precious Blood.

Yet for all this, in His enduring love and unchanging goodness, He bids thee to His divine table ; nay, at times constrains thee to come to it on pain of death. He closes not the door of His mercy, nor turns His divine presence from thee, though by nature thou art leprous, lame, diseased, blind, possessed by devils, and hast gone after many lovers.

This only does He require of thee :

1st. To mourn over thine offence against Him.

2d. Above all things to hate sin, whether great or small.

3d. To offer and give thyself up wholly to His will and His obedience ; always in affection, and as occasion offers, in act.

4th. Firmly to believe and hope that He will then pardon and cleanse thee, and preserve thee from all thine enemies.

Encouraged by this unspeakable love of the Lord, thou wilt then draw near and communicate with a holy and loving fear, saying :

“ Lord, I am not worthy to receive Thee, because I have so many and many a time offended Thee, nor have I yet mourned as I should have done over my offences against Thee.

“ Lord, I am not worthy to receive Thee ; for I am not yet perfectly cleansed from the pollution of venial sins.

“ Lord, I am not worthy to receive Thee ; because I have not given myself up sincerely to Thy love, to Thy will, and to Thy obedience.

“ O Lord, omnipotent and infinitely good, by virtue of Thy goodness and Thy word, make me worthy, O my soul’s love, with this faith to receive Thee.”

When thou hast communicated, shut thyself up immediately in the secret of thy heart, and, apart from all created things, hold converse with thy Lord in some such form as the following :

“ O Most High, King of Heaven ! what has brought Thee within me, who am miserable, poor, blind, and naked ?”—and He will answer, “ Love.”

And thou wilt reply, “ O uncreated Love, O sweet Love, what wilt Thou from me ?”

“ Nothing,” He will answer thee, “ but love. I would have no other fire to burn upon the altar of thy heart, and in thy sacrifices, and in all thy works, but the fire of My love, which, consuming all other love and all self-will, will be a most sweet savour unto Me.

“ This I have required of thee, and still require, because I desire to be wholly thine, and that thou shouldst be wholly Mine ; and this will never be till thou hast made that entire resignation of thyself which is so pleasing to Me, and become detached from all self-love, self-opinion, self-will, and self-esteem.

“ I ask thee to hate thyself, that I may give thee My love ; I ask thy heart, that it may be united to Mine, which to this end was

pierced upon the cross ; and I ask thee to give Me thy whole self, that I may give Myself wholly to thee.

“ Thou seest that I am of priceless value ; yet of My goodness I value Myself but at thy worth : buy Me, then, O beloved soul, by giving Me thyself.

“ I desire this of thee, that thou shouldst will nothing, think nothing, understand nothing, see nothing, but Me and My will ; that I may will all, think all, understand all, and see all in thee ; so that thy nothingness being absorbed in the depth of My infinity, may be changed into it ; so wilt thou be fully blest and happy in Me, and I wholly content in thee.”

Lastly, offer to the Father His only-begotten Son,—first as a thank-offering, then for thine own wants, and those of all to whom thou art in any way bound, and for the souls in purgatory ; and make this offering in commemoration of and in union with that which He made of Himself, when He offered Himself to the Father, hanging bleeding on the cross.

And thus mayest thou likewise offer to Him all the sacrifices offered on that day in the holy Roman Church.

CH. LVI.—OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

ALTHOUGH we cannot receive the Lord sacramentally more than once a day, we may, as I have said, receive Him spiritually every hour and every moment ; and this blessing no creature can take from us, unless we lose it by our own fault. And this spiritual communion will sometimes be more beneficial to the soul,

and more acceptable to God, than many sacramental communions, through the fault of the recipients.

As often, then, as thou shalt dispose and prepare thyself for such communion, thou wilt find the Son of God ready to give Himself to thee with His own hands for thy spiritual food.

By way of preparation, turn to Him with thy whole heart; and after a brief review of thy failings, mourn with Him over the offence thus offered to His Majesty; and beseech Him with all humility and faith, that He would deign to enter into thy poor soul, and bring with Him new grace to heal and fortify it against the enemy.

Or again; when striving to subdue self, to mortify any one of thine appetites, or to perform some act of virtue, do all with a view to prepare thy heart for the Lord, who is continually asking it of thee; and then turn to Him, and invite Him earnestly to come with His grace to heal thee, and deliver thee from thine enemies, that He alone may take possession of thy heart.

Or else, calling to mind thy last sacramental communion, say, with a burning heart, "When, O Lord, shall I again receive Thee?—when! O when?"

But if thou wouldst prepare thyself to make a more solemn spiritual communion, begin from the preceding evening to direct all thy acts of virtue or mortification, and all thy other good works to this end—*i. e.* the spiritual reception of thy Lord.

And early in the morning try to enkindle

in thine heart a great desire to receive Him, as an act well pleasing to Him, by a consideration of the great happiness and profit of the soul which worthily receives the most holy sacrament of the altar; for thereby lost virtues are restored, the soul recovers her original beauty, and the fruits and merits of the passion of the Son of God are communicated to her. Consider, also, how pleasing it is to God that we receive this sacrament and enjoy these blessings, and endeavour to enkindle in thy heart a great desire to receive it, in order to please Him.

The desire being thus enkindled, turn to Him, saying: "Lord, I am not permitted to receive Thee sacramentally to-day; vouchsafe, then, O uncreated Power and Goodness, to pardon and cleanse me from all my faults, that I may worthily receive Thee spiritually, not now only, but daily and hourly; and give me new grace and strength to resist all my enemies, and especially that one against whom, for Thy love, I am now waging war."

CH. LVII.—OF THANKSGIVING.

SINCE all the good we have, and all the good we do, is of God and from God, we are bound to give Him thanks for all our virtuous exercises and victories, and for all the blessings, general or particular, which we have received from His merciful hand.

And to do this in a becoming manner, we must consider the end for which the Lord bestows His favours upon us; for from this consideration and knowledge we come to learn

how God would be thanked. And because, in all His blessings, the Lord designs, in the first place, His own honour, and to draw us to His service, consider thus with thyself: "What power, wisdom, and goodness has my God displayed in bestowing this grace and blessing upon me!"

Then, seeing that there is nothing in thee of thine own which could merit any blessing, but, on the contrary, nothing but demerit and ingratitude, say to thy Lord, with profound humility:

"How is it, O Lord, that Thou wilt vouchsafe to look upon a dead dog, bestowing so many blessings upon me? Blessed be Thy name for all ages!"

And lastly, seeing that by His bounty He would excite thee to love and serve Him, inflame thyself with love towards this most loving Lord, and with a sincere desire to serve Him in whatever manner He may appoint. And to this end make a full oblation of thyself in the following manner.

CH. LVIII.—OF SELF-OBLATION.

THERE are two things necessary to make thy self-oblation in all respects acceptable to God. One, that it be made in union with the offering made by Christ to the Father. The other, that thy will be wholly freed from all attachment to creatures.

1st. Thou must know that the Son of God, while dwelling in this vale of tears, offered to His Heavenly Father, not Himself and His works only, but with Himself us also and our

works. Thus, our offerings must be made also in union with His offering, and in dependence upon it.

2d. Consider well, before offering up thyself, whether thy will be attached to any earthly thing; for if it be, thou must first detach thyself therefrom; and for this end have recourse to God, that His right hand may deliver thee; so that thou mayest be able to offer thyself wholly free and unfettered to His divine majesty.

And be very watchful on this point; because if thou offer thyself to God while bound to any creature, thou offerest not thine own but another's, seeing that thou art not thine own, but the property of those creatures to whom thy will is attached; thou offerest thus a mockery to thy Lord, and deeply offendest Him. Hence it is that our frequent oblations of ourselves to God so often return to us void and fruitless, and that we fall moreover afterwards into various defects and sins.

We may, indeed, offer ourselves to God while still attached to creatures; but it must be in order that His goodness may set us free, that we may give ourselves up wholly to His service; and this we should do frequently and with great earnestness.

Let thy oblation, then, be free from all admixture of earthly affection or regard to self. looking neither to earthly nor heavenly blessings, but to the will and providence of God alone, to whom thou shouldst submit thyself entirely; offering thyself up as a perpetual holocaust, and severed from all created things,

say, "Behold, my Lord and Creator, I submit each and all my desires to the disposal of Thy eternal providence and will. Do with me as seemeth good to Thee, in life, and in death, and after death ; in time and in eternity."

If thou makest this offering with sincerity, which will be proved when adverse events arise, thou wilt become a trafficker not in earthly but in most blessed and heavenly merchandise. Thou wilt be God's, and He will be thine ; for He dwells continually with those who, renouncing themselves and all other creatures, offer themselves up as a holocaust to His Divine Majesty.

Here, then, thou seest an infallible method of vanquishing all thine enemies ; for if in this oblation thou so unite thyself to God as to become all His, and He all thine, what power or what enemy can ever injure thee ? And when thou wouldst offer to Him any one of thy works, as fasts, prayers, acts of patience, or any other good deed, turn thy thoughts first to the oblation which Christ made to the Father of His fasts, prayers, and other works, and in dependence on the worth and virtue of these, offer then thine own.

If thou wouldst offer the works of Christ to thy heavenly Father in satisfaction for thine offences, do it in the following manner :

Make a general, and sometimes a particular review of thy sins ; and seeing clearly that it is impossible for thee of thyself to appease the wrath of God, or to satisfy the divine justice, turn to the life and passion of His Son, and meditate upon some one of His actions . as.

for example, when He fasted, prayed, suffered, and shed His blood. Here thou wilt see that, in order to propitiate the Father for thee, and to pay the debt of thy iniquity, He offered to Him these His works, His sufferings, and His blood, saying as it were, "Behold, O Eternal Father, according to Thy will, I make satisfaction superabundantly to Thy justice for the sins and debts of N. May it please Thy Divine Majesty to remit them, and to receive her into the number of Thine elect."

Then, in thine own person, make the same oblation, and offer these prayers to the Father, imploring Him, through their merit, to forgive thee all thy debts. And this thou mayest do, not only as thou passest from one mystery to another, but even from one act of each mystery to another; and this mode of oblation may be used not only for thyself, but for others.

CH. LIX.—OF SENSIBLE DEVOTION AND OF DRYNESS.

SENSIBLE devotion is sometimes produced by nature, sometimes by the devil, and sometimes by grace. Thou wilt discern by its fruits from which of these it comes; for if it be not followed by amendment, thou hast reason to fear that it proceeds from the devil or from nature, and the rather if it be accompanied by a large measure of consolation, satisfaction, or complacency, or by any degree of self-esteem.

When, therefore, thou shalt feel thy heart melted by these spiritual delights, do not stand disputing about the source whence they spring, neither dwell upon them, nor suffer them to allure thee from the knowledge of thine own

nothingness : but with increased diligence and hatred of self, strive to keep thy heart free from all attachment even to spiritual things, and desire God alone and His good pleasure ; for by this means the consolation, though it may proceed from nature or from the devil, will bear to thee the fruits of grace.

Dryness may in like manner proceed from the three following causes :

1st. From the devil, in order to chill our spirit and turn it aside from our spiritual enterprise to worldly business and pleasure.

2d. From ourselves, through our own faults, negligences, and earthly attachments.

3d. From grace, either to warn us to be more diligent in withdrawing ourselves from every attachment and occupation which does not lead to God, or terminate in Him ; or that we may learn by experience that all our blessings come from Him ; or to teach us to prize His gifts more highly in future, and to be more humble and careful in preserving them ; or to unite us more closely to His Divine Majesty by an entire renunciation of self, even in spiritual enjoyments, lest our affections being set upon them, that heart be divided which the Lord would keep wholly for Himself ; or else, because for our good He delights in seeing us fight with our whole strength and make full use of His grace.

When thou art, then, in dryness, enter into thyself to discover the fault for which thou hast been deprived of sensible devotion, and turn thy weapons against it ; not in order to recover the sensible enjoyment of grace, but

in order to rid thyself of what is displeasing to Him. And if thou canst not discover the fault, then instead of sensible devotion, be content with that true devotion which consists in prompt resignation to the will of God. On no account, however, lay aside thy spiritual exercises, but persevere therein with all thy power, however fruitless and insipid they may seem to thee; drinking willingly the cup of bitterness which the loving will of God presents to thee in this dryness. And though it be accompanied by such thick mental darkness that thou knowest not which way to turn, or what step next to take, yet fear not, but remain stedfast and solitary on the cross, refusing every earthly consolation which may be offered to thee by the world or by any creature.

Conceal thy sufferings from all except thy spiritual father; and reveal them to him, not to alleviate thy pain, but to learn how to bear it according to the will of God.

Use communions, prayers, and all other exercises, not to take thee down from the cross, but to give thee strength to exalt that cross to the greater glory of the Crucified.

And if, from confusion of mind, thou canst neither pray nor meditate as usual, meditate and pray as best thou canst. And what thou art unable to do with the understanding, force thyself to do with the will and with the mouth, conversing with thyself and with the Lord; for this will produce wonderful effects, and thy heart will thus gain grace and strength.

In such a case, then, say thus: *Quare tristis es, anima mea, et quare conturbas me? Spera*

in Deo, quoniam adhuc confitebor illi, salutare vultus mei et Deus meus. Ut quid, Domine, recessisti longe, despicias in opportunitate, in tribulatione? Non me derelinquas usquequaque.

And calling to mind that sacred lesson where-with God, in time of trouble, inspired His beloved Sara, the wife of Tobias, make use of it also, and say aloud: "But this every one is sure of that worshippeth Thee, that his life, if it be under trial, shall be crowned; and if it be under tribulation, it shall be delivered; and if it be under correction, it shall be allowed to come to Thy mercy. For Thou art not delighted in our being lost, because after a storm Thou makest a calm; and after tears and weeping Thou pourest in joyfulness. Be Thy Name, O God of Israel, blessed for ever." *Tob. iii.*

Remember, also, thy Christ, who, in the garden and on the cross, was to His great grief forsaken as to all sensible consolation by His heavenly Father; and bearing the cross with Him, say with all thine heart, "Thy will be done."

So will thy prayer and thy patience make the flame of thy heart's sacrifice to ascend into the presence of God, rendering thee truly devout. For true devotion is, as I have told thee, a lively and stedfast readiness of will to follow Christ, and to bear the cross in whatever way He invites and calls us to Himself, to desire God for God, and sometimes to leave God for God.

And if many, women especially, who are striving after the spiritual life, would make

His, and not sensible devotion, the measure of their progress, they would not be deceived, either by the devil or by themselves; nor would they idly, nay, ungratefully, murmur at such a great gift from the Lord, but they would give themselves up with increased fervour to serve His Divine Majesty, who orders or permits all things for His glory and our benefit.

And here, again, do women deceive themselves, who, although they avoid with due fear and prudence all occasions of sin, yet are at times molested by horrible, impure, and frightful thoughts, and even by loathsome visions. They are straightway confounded and disheartened, and believe themselves to be forsaken by God, and wholly banished from His presence; not believing it possible for a heart filled with such imaginations to be the dwelling-place of His Holy Spirit.

Being thus cast down, they are ready to despair, and leaving all their holy exercises, to turn back into Egypt; for they do not well understand the grace thus vouchsafed them by the Lord, who suffers them to be assailed by these spirits of temptation, to bring them to a knowledge of themselves, and by the sense of their need of help to draw them to Himself. Therefore they thanklessly complain of that for which they should return thanks to His infinite goodness.

What thou hast to do in such a case is, to consider deeply thine own perverse inclination, which, for thy good, God would have thee to know is ever disposed to every most grievous sin, and ready, but for His assistance, to cast

thee headlong into utter perdition. And from this gather hope and confidence that He is ready to help thee, since He shows thee the danger, and would draw thee nearer to Himself, by prayer and by confidence in Him. Therefore thou shouldst return Him most humble thanks.

And be assured that such seducing spirits and evil thoughts are better defeated by readily applying thyself to duties and by patient endurance of the pain, than by an over-anxious resistance.

CH. LX.—OF EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

In the examination of conscience consider three things :

The falls of that day.

Their cause.

The promptness and energy wherewith thou seekest to resist them, and to acquire the contrary virtues.

As to the falls, thou wilt do what I have advised in the chapter which treats of what we should do when we are wounded. The occasion of these falls thou must endeavour to overcome and utterly abolish.

The will to do this and to acquire virtues, thou wilt strengthen by self-distrust, trust in God, and by a multitude of other acts of detestation of the vice, and desire of the opposite virtue.

Be distrustful of the victories and good works which thou mayest have already achieved ; for I would not have thee think much of them, on account of the almost inevitable danger of

some lurking motive of pride or vain-glory. Therefore, whatever they be, leave them all behind to the mercy of God, and consider how much more remains for thee to do.

As to thanksgiving for the gifts and favour which the Lord hath bestowed upon thee in the course of the day, acknowledge Him as the author of all good, and thank Him for having delivered thee from so many open, and still more, from so many hidden enemies; for having given thee good thoughts and opportunities of performing virtuous actions, and for all the other blessings which thou hast unconsciously received.

OR. LXI.—THAT WE MUST PERSEVERE IN THIS CONFLICT, AND FIGHT CONTINUALLY, EVEN UNTO DEATH.

ONE of the requisites in this conflict is perseverance in the continual mortification of our passions, which are never extinct in this life, but, on the contrary, spring up hourly like evil weeds.

And from this battle there is no escape, for it ends only with life; and he who lays down his arms is of necessity either captured or slain.

Besides this, we have to deal with enemies who bear us an unceasing hatred; so that we can neither hope for peace or truce with them: because they destroy those most cruelly who most desire to make friends with them.

Thou hast no cause, however, to fear either their number or their power; for in this battle no one can be a loser, except by his own will; for the whole power of our enemies is in the

hands of that Captain for whose honour we have to fight.

And not only will He preserve thee from all treachery, but He will Himself fight for thee ; and, being more powerful than all thine enemies, He will assuredly give thee the victory, if only thou wilt fight manfully at His side ; trusting not in thyself, but in His power and goodness.

And if the Lord should for a time delay to give thee the victory, be not disheartened, but believe assuredly (and so shalt thou fight resolutely) that He will turn all things which may befall thee to thy good and profit, even such as may seem most unlikely and most adverse to thy success, if only thou wilt bear thyself as a faithful and generous warrior.

Do thou, then, follow thy Heavenly Captain, who, for thee, has overcome the world, and given up Himself to death. Apply thyself with a strong heart to this conflict, and to the utter destruction of all thine enemies ; for if thou leave but one of them alive, it will be a beam in thine eye and a thorn in thy side, to hinder thee in thy glorious and victorious course.

CH. LXII.—HOW TO PREPARE OURSELVES AGAINST THE ENEMIES WHO ASSAIL US AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

ALTHOUGH our whole life on earth be a continual warfare, yet the chief and most momentous struggle is at the last hour of the great passage ; for he who falls at that point rises again no more.

That this hour, then, may find thee well prepared, thou must fight manfully now in

this present time which is allotted thee; for he who fights well through life will, by the good habit already acquired, gain an easy victory at the hour of death. Meditate also frequently and with attentive consideration upon death; and so thou wilt fear him the less when he comes upon thee, and thy mind will be freer and readier for the conflict.

Worldly men fly from the thought, lest it disturb their delight in earthly things, on which they have so wilfully set their affections that the thought of quitting them gives them pain. Thus their unruly affections, instead of diminishing, gain daily strength; and the idea of separation from this life, and from so much that is dear to them, is unspeakably grievous, and often most so to those who have enjoyed it longest.

The better to assist thee in this important preparation, imagine thyself sometimes alone and helpless in the agonies of death, and image to thy mind the following things which at that moment may be likely to trouble thee; and then think upon the remedies which I shall give thee that thou mayest make the better use of them in that last strait; for the blow which can be struck but once should be well practised beforehand, lest we commit an error which can never be remedied.

CH. LXIII.—OF FOUR ASSAULTS OF OUR ENEMIES AT THE HOUR OF DEATH: AND FIRST OF THE ASSAULT UPON OUR FAITH, AND HOW TO REPEL IT.

THERE are four principal and most dangerous assaults which our enemies are wont to direct

against us at the hour of death. These are, temptations against faith, despair, vain-glory, and various illusions of demons transforming themselves into angels of light.

As to the first assault, retire instantly from the understanding to the will, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan, father of lies; for I will not even listen to thee; it is enough for me to believe as the Holy Roman Church believes."

And exclude as far as possible all speculations concerning the faith, however plausible they may seem; looking upon them as suggestions of the devil to cause disturbance.

But if it be too late to turn thy thoughts resolutely away from such matters, at least refuse firmly and steadfastly to yield to any reason or argument from Scripture which the adversary may advance; for all, though apparently good, clear, and evident, will be garbled, misinterpreted, or misapplied.

And if the wily serpent ask thee what the Roman Church believes, make him no answer; but seeing his artifice, and that he is seeking to entrap thee in thy words, make an interior act of yet more lively faith—or else, to make him burst with rage, reply that the Holy Roman Church believes the truth; and if the Evil One should ask again, "What is this truth?" answer, "Even that which she believes."

Above all, keep thy heart intently fixed on the Crucified, saying: "My God, my Creator, and my Saviour, haste Thee to help me, that I swerve not from the truth of Thy Holy Catholic

faith ; but grant that as I was born in this faith, so in it, to Thy glory, I may end this mortal life."

CH. LXIV.—OF THE ASSAULT OF DESPAIR AND ITS REMEDY.

THE second assault by which the perverse fiend attempts our utter overthrow, is the terror which he infuses into our minds at the remembrance of our sins, in order to make us throw ourselves into the gulf of despair.

In this peril, hold fast to this infallible rule, that the remembrance of thy sins is the effect of grace, and tends to salvation, when it produces humility, sorrow for having offended God, and confidence in His mercy. But when such thoughts disquiet thee, and make thee fearful and fainthearted, though they may look so like truth as to make thee believe thyself condemned, and thy day of salvation to be past, know assuredly that they come from the deceiver ; humble thyself, then, the more, and trust the more confidently in God ; so shalt thou overcome the enemy with his own weapons, and glorify the Lord. Mourn, indeed, over thine offences against God, as often as they recur to thy memory ; but yet implore their pardon with a full trust in His Passion.

I will say further, that should God Himself seem to say to thee that thou art not one of His sheep, still on no account let go thy confidence in Him ; but say to Him, with all humility : "Thou hast good reason, indeed, O Lord, in my sins to condemn me ; but I have greater reason in Thy mercy to hope for pardon. Save, therefore, I beseech Thee, this Thy

miserable creature, condemned, indeed, by her own sinfulness, but redeemed by the price of Thy blood. I commit myself wholly to Thy hands, O my Redeemer ; trusting fully to Thy infinite compassion, that thou mayest save me, to the glory of Thy Name. Do with me what Thou wilt, for Thou art my only Lord ; yea, though Thou slay, still will I hope in Thee."

CH. LXV.—OF THE ASSAULT OF VAIN-GLORY.

THE third assault is that of vain-glory and presumption. Here thou must be on thy guard against suffering thyself to be beguiled on any pretext whatsoever into the slightest complacency in thyself or thy works. Let thy complacency be in the Lord alone, in His mercy and in the works of His life and passion.

Humble thyself more and more in thine own eyes, even to thy latest breath ; and should any good work which thou hast done be brought to thy memory, acknowledge God alone for its author. Fly to Him for aid ; but expect it not for thy merit's sake, however great and many may be the victories thou hast achieved. Stand ever in holy fear, sincerely acknowledging that all thy labours will be vain, unless thy God vouchsafe to gather thee under the shadow of His wings. In His protection alone do thou put thy trust.

If thou wilt follow this counsel, thine enemies shall never prevail against thee. And so will the road be open before thee, whereby thou shalt pass on joyfully to the heavenly Jerusalem.

CHE. LXVI.—OF THE ASSAULT OF ILLUSIONS AND FALSE APPEARANCES AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH.

IF our obstinate foe, who is never weary of troubling us, assail thee by false appearances, transforming himself into an angel of light, stand firm and stedfast, nevertheless, in the acknowledgment of thine own nothingness, and say to him boldly : “ Return, wretch, into thy darkness ; for I am unworthy of visions, nor do I need any thing but the mercy of my Saviour, and the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and all the Saints.”

And though the visions seem to bear many evident tokens that they come from heaven, still reject them, and as far as thou canst drive them from thee. And fear not lest this resistance, which is founded on thine own unworthiness, should displease the Lord ; for if the thing be from Him, He knows how to make it clear, and thou wilt be no loser ; for He who gives grace to the humble withdraws it not because of acts which spring from humility.

These are the weapons which the enemy most commonly employs against us at this last step. He tempts each man according to the particular inclination to which he knows him to be most subject. Therefore, before the hour of the great conflict draws near, we should arm ourselves securely, and struggle manfully against our most violent passions, and those which have the greatest mastery over us, that the victory may be easier in that hour which leaves us no future time for preparation or resistance. “ Thou shalt fight against them until they be utterly destroyed.” *1 Kings xv. 18.*

SUPPLEMENT

TO

THE SPIRITUAL COMBAT.

I.—WHAT CONSTITUTES CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

THAT thou weary not thyself in vain, O devout soul, in spiritual exercises, as many have done, running thou knowest not whither, thou hast first to learn what constitutes Christian perfection.

Christian perfection is nothing else but a full and entire observance of the precepts and laws of God, with the sole view to please Him; neither turning back, nor declining to the right hand or to the left. And this is the whole duty of man.

So that the whole scope of the life of the Christian who aims at perfection must be a study to acquire daily more and more the habit of forgetting self, and unaccustoming himself to do his own will, that he may do all things from the single motive of the will of God, and with a view to please and honour Him alone.

II.—HOW TO FIGHT IN ORDER TO ATTAIN CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

THE great design we have in hand has been expressed in few words ; but to take it in hand and bring it to perfection, this is the work, this the labour of life. For as by the sin of our first parents, and our own evil habits, there is within us a law contrary to the law of God, we have to fight against ourselves, and also against the world and the devil, the moving and exciting causes of our conflicts.

III.—OF THREE THINGS NEEDFUL FOR THE YOUNG SOLDIER OF CHRIST.

HAVING then declared war, young soldier of Christ, thou hast need of three things : a heart strong and resolute for the combat, arms, and skill to use them.

Thou wilt derive resolution for the conflict, by frequently considering that the life of man upon earth is a warfare ; and that the law of this conflict is, that he who acquits himself not as he ought to do shall without doubt perish eternally.

Strength of heart will be acquired, first by self-distrust, and then by firm trust in God, and a confidence that He is within thee to deliver thee from all danger.

Whenever thou art, then, assaulted by enemies, thou mayest be assured of victory, if only thou wilt throw thyself in full confidence on the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God.

Thy arms must be force and resistance.

IV.—OF FORCE AND RESISTANCE, AND HOW TO USE THEM.

FORCE and resistance, though cumbrous and heavy weapons, are nevertheless both necessary and victorious.

They are to be used in the following manner. When thou art buffeted by thy corrupt will and evil habits, because thou hast neither willed nor done the will of God, resist them, saying : “ Yes, yes, I will do it.”

Oppose the same resistance to them, when thou feelest a desire arising within thee to withstand these evil habits and this corrupt will, and say : “ No, no ; I will always, by God’s help, do His will. O my God, haste Thee to help me, lest this desire, which, by Thy grace, I now feel always to do Thy will, be stifled when occasions arise by my old and corrupt will.”

And if thou find resistance painful, and thy will very weak, thou must use all manner of violence against thyself, remembering that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence ; and that the violent against themselves and their own passions take it by force.

And if thy heart be wrung with anguish by the exceeding violence of the struggle, go in spirit to Christ in the garden, and uniting thy agony to His, beseech Him, by the virtue of His own, to give thee victory over thyself ; that so with thy whole heart thou mayst say to thy Heavenly Father, Not as I will, but as Thou wilt. Let Thy will be done.

Exercise thyself, then, repeatedly in bending thy will to the will of God, willing as He wills thee to will. Study to perform every action

with as great intensity of will and purity of intention, as if it contained within itself all perfection, and the whole honour and glory of God were involved therein. And go on to perform the second, third, fourth, and all succeeding acts in the same manner.

Again, if the remembrance of some past transgression come to thy mind, mourn over it, and call up greater energy of soul to obey God in the occasion now present, and all others which may arise hereafter.

And here I would remind thee, in order that thou mayst neglect no opportunity, however trifling, of obeying God, that if thou wilt be obedient to Him in little things, He will give thee new grace henceforth to obey Him easily in greater.

Accustom thyself, also, when any Divine precept occurs to thy mind, first to lift up thy heart to adore God, and then beseech Him to give thee His aid, when the occasion offers to obey Him.

V.—THAT WE MUST KEEP A CONTINUAL WATCH OVER OUR WILL, IN ORDER TO DISCOVER TO WHAT PASSION IT INCLINES.

ENTER into thyself as deeply as possible, in order to discover to which of thy passions thy will is most frequently inclined; for by this, more than by any other, is it wont to be seduced and enslaved.

For as the human will is seldom free from the presence of some one of the passions, it necessarily loves or hates, desires or avoids, is glad or sorry, hopes or despairs, fears or is bold or is angry.

If thou find it, then, to be moved, not according to the will of God, but by the love of self, endeavour to turn it from this self-love to the love of God, and the observance of His precepts and His law. And this should be done not only with regard to those strong passions which lead to mortal sin, but to those also which are the occasion of venial transgressions ; for these, if voluntary, though they move lightly and tread softly, keep us ever weak and destitute of virtue, and bring us into imminent peril of falling into mortal sin.

VI.—HOW, BY UPROOTING THE FIRST PASSION OF THE SOUL, WHICH IS LOVE OF CREATURES AND OF SELF, AND GIVING IT TO GOD, ALL THE REST WILL BE WELL ORDERED AND REGULATED.

IN order to free thy will speedily and in due order from unruly passions, thou must first set thyself wholly to subdue and regulate the first passion, which is love ; for if this be once brought under rule, all others will follow it step by step ; since all spring from love, and thence derive their root and life. And this thou wilt plainly perceive as we proceed ; for what a man loves, that does he desire, and in that does he delight ; but he hates, shuns, and is grieved by that which injures the object of his love, or impedes his enjoyment of it ; nor does he hope for any thing but that which he loves. And it is when the difficulty of obtaining what we love seems insuperable and invincible, that we despair.

In like manner, fear, courage, or anger are awakened by something which injures or of-

sends the object of our love, or hinders us from obtaining it.

The way to subdue and regulate this first passion is, to consider the qualities of the object it loves and to which it is attached, and to see what is its aim in this love and attachment. And if thou discover any beautiful, delightful, or useful qualities therein, thou mayest say frequently to thyself: "And what can exceed the beauty and goodness of God, Who is the sole fountain of all goodness and perfection?"

"And what end can be imagined more useful and delightful than to love God? for by loving Him man is transformed into Him, and delights and rejoices in Him alone."

Moreover, the heart of man belongs to God, because God Himself created and then redeemed it; and daily, by new blessings, asks for it, saying: "My son, give Me thy heart."

So that, the heart of man belonging wholly to God for many reasons, which we will give hereafter, and being all too little to discharge its obligations to Him, we should be most jealous over it, that it may love God alone and those things which please Him, and that in the mode and degree which pleases Him most.

We must exercise the same jealousy over the passion of hatred, that we may hate nothing but sin, or that which leads to sin. For on these two passions, love and hatred, rests the whole fabric of Christian perfection.

VII.—THAT THE HUMAN WILL STANDS IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE.

OUR impassioned will, as experience too well proves, is very weak in resisting and subduing its passions, and subjecting them to God and His obedience. For, even when willing and resolved to mortify itself, it is too often stifled by its passions, all its good purposes and resolves are effaced ; so that it falls an easy prey to them. It needs, then, help and assistance, not only in the hour of trial, but beforehand ; that so, being strengthened against itself, it may gain the victory, and being freed from the bondage of its passions, may yield itself up wholly to God and His good pleasure.

VIII.—THAT THE WILL OF MAN IS MUCH AIDED BY VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

OUR passions being greatly excited by the world and the things of the world, when its greatness, pleasures, and riches are presented before us, it necessarily follows that if these be trampled under foot, the will of man must turn elsewhere ; for it cannot live and breathe without some object to love and delight in.

The way to subdue the world is, to consider attentively the real value of its gifts and promises.

And lest we should be blinded by some of our passions, and so make a false judgment thereof, let us take for our consideration and conclusion the words of Solomon, the wisest of men, who had had exact experience of them all : Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and affliction of spirit.

This truth is proved every day ; for the heart

of man desires to be satisfied ; and yet if it had all its desires, it would still remain unsatisfied ; nay, it would be tormented by a still greater craving,—and this because, in feeding upon the things of the world, it feeds upon dreams and shadows, vanity and lies, things which afford no nourishment.

The promises of the world are all false and deceitful. It promises one thing for another. It promises happiness, and gives disquiet. In most cases it promises, and gives nothing. It gives, and speedily takes away again ; or if it take not away at once, it does but the more bitterly afflict the flames of passion, whose desires are fixed upon the mire. To them it may be said : Ye sons of men, why are you heavy of heart ? For what end do you love vanity and seek after a lie ?

But even allowing that, in a certain sense, the apparent blessings of the world are real, what shall be said of the speed wherewith the life of man passeth away ? Where is all the happiness and the pride and the greatness of princes, kings, and emperors ? It hath all passed away.

The way, then, to overcome the world, that it may become loathsome to thee and thou to it, or rather that thou mayest be crucified to it and it to thee, is to consider well, first with thine understanding, and then with thy will, the vanity and falsehood of the world, before thy will be set upon it ; that so, both the will and the understanding being free, thou mayest easily despise it, and be able to say to every creature that comes before thee : “ Art thou a

creature ? Away with all attachment to thee ; for in the creature I will seek only the Creator, and spiritual, not earthly affection.

“ I will and desire to love not thee, but Him who gives thee life and virtue.”

IX.—OF THE SECOND AID TO THE WILL.

THE second way to help the human will is to drive away the prince of darkness, as the author of every inordinate excitement of the passions. We drive out and conquer this enemy whenever we overcome self in its concupiscences and inordinate desires.

If, then, thou wouldst make the devil fly from thee, resist thy passions ; for this is the resistance which St. James would have thee offer to him. And here it is to be noted, that the devil sometimes so assails us by enkindling our passions and the concupiscence of the flesh, that we seem as if constrained to yield. But there is no cause for fear. Only resist him in the full assurance that God is with thee, and will not suffer thee to be caught in the snare. Resist, I say ; for if thou persevere, thou wilt assuredly gain the victory.

I say, *if thou persevere* ; for it is not enough to resist once, twice, or thrice, but as often as he shall tempt thee. For it is the devil's custom to attempt to-morrow what he has failed to effect to-day, and next week what he has not been able to attain in this ; and so he goes on with much patience from time to time, now with fury, now with cunning, till he gain his end.

Therefore stand constantly on thy guard,

with thine arms in thine hand ; trust not to the victories thou mayest have already gained, how many soever they be, seeing that man's life is a continual warfare, and that the victory depends on the end, and not on the success of to-day or to-morrow.

And if this resistance be painful to thee, know that it is far more so to thine adversary. Hence for thy consolation thou mayest say to him, " Go, and endure torment, infernal spirit ; but seeing thou sufferest through thy wickedness, and that I am not offending my Lord, thy present suffering shall be eternal, and mine, by the grace of God, shall be exchanged for everlasting peace."

X.—OF THE TEMPTATIONS OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

I HAVE spoken in the preceding chapter of the temptations which the devil is wont to present to us by means of the grandeur, riches, and pleasures of the world. I will now speak of the temptations of spiritual pride, self-complacency, and vain-glory, which are more perilous and formidable, because less obvious and more hostile to God.

O, how many noble warriors and great servants of God, after many and many years of victory, have through this pride been laid low and made slaves of Lucifer ! The way to avoid this tremendous blow and hidden snare is to fear continually, and to perform good works with fear and trembling, lest some hidden worm of pride and self-love spoil them and make them hateful in the sight of God. Humble thyself, therefore, in the performance of them,

and strive continually to do them better, as though thou hadst hitherto done nothing good. And even if we think, which we never ought to do, that we have done all things well, we must still say with our whole heart, We are unprofitable servants.

Above all, turn frequently to Christ, that He may free thee from all pride, and teach and help thee to be humble of heart. And have frequent recourse to the most humble Mother of God, beseeching her to obtain for thee true humility, which is the foundation of all virtues, and increases them and accompanies their growth, that they be not lost, but augmented and fortified.

Having treated at length in the *Spiritual Combat* on this matter of humility, I will say no more upon it here.

XI.—OF THE THIRD AID TO THE HUMAN WILL.

THE third means which we should use most frequently to aid our will is prayer. Accustom thyself on the first assault to turn to God, saying, Incline unto my aid, O God ; O Lord, make haste to help me.

Let thy combat, then, be accompanied by prayer, by resistance as before God, by self-distrust and trust in God : thus fighting, and thus armed, thou mayest account the victory certain.

What will not prayer subdue and conquer ! What will not resistance overcome, accompanied by self-distrust and trust in God ! And in what battle can he be overcome, who stands

in the presence of God with a determined will to please Him ?

XII.—HOW WE MAY LEARN TO KEEP OURSELVES IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD WHENSOEVER WE WILL.

To acquire the habit of keeping ourselves at all times in the presence of God, try to remember frequently that God is ever secretly present with thee ; that He beholds thee, and considers all thy thoughts and works.

Or, again, that the creatures which thou beholdest are like so many bars through which the hidden God beholds thee, and says continually : Ask, and you shall receive. For everyone that asketh, receiveth ; and to him who knocks, the door is opened.

Thou mayest also place thyself in the presence of God by meditating on His creatures. Passing by their corporeal substance, raise thy thoughts to God, who gives them their power of motion and of action.

When, therefore, thou wouldst implore help from God in this thy warfare, or in any of thy employments, place thyself in His presence, in one of the ways above described, and then implore and beseech Him to help and succour thee.

And learn here, O devout soul, that if thou wilt make thyself familiar with the presence of God, thou wilt gain countless victories and treasures. Thou wilt learn also to guard thyself against all impulses, thoughts, words and works which accord not with the presence of God and the life of His Son. And the presence of God will itself give thee strength to abide in His presence.

For if, from the presence and vicinity of natural agents, whose virtue is finite and limited, we gain somewhat of their qualities and virtues, what shall be said of the presence of God, whose virtue is infinite and unspeakably communicable ?

Besides the kind of prayer above described,—Incline unto my aid, O God ; O Lord, make haste to help me,—which suits every need, thou mayest also use prayers of a more special nature. Thus, if desirous to know and do the will of God, pray after the following manner : Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me to do Thy justice. Lead me, O Lord, in the way of Thy commandments. Would that my ways were directed to keep Thy justifications.

And if thou wouldst ask of God all that can be asked of Him, and what He most wills that we should ask, use the Lord's Prayer, which should be said with the whole affection of the heart and with all possible attention.

XIII.—SOME FARTHER ADVICE CONCERNING PRAYER.

I WOULD first advise thee to use short prayers. I am not now speaking of meditation, which shall be treated of presently. Let thy prayers, then, as in the example just given, be short but frequent, full of longing desire, and of stedfast faith that God is ready to help thee, if not in thine own way and at thine own time, yet with more effectual aid and at a more suitable season.

Secondly, let thy prayers be always accompanied, either actually or virtually, by one of

the following little clauses : *Of Thy goodness. According to Thy promises. To Thine honour. In the name of Thy beloved Son. By virtue of His passion. In the name of the Virgin Mary, thy Daughter and Spouse and Mother.*

Thirdly, let them be sometimes accompanied by ejaculatory prayers, as : *Grant me Thy love, O Lord, in the name of Thy dear Son, and When, O Lord, shall I obtain it? When, O, when?* Thou mayest do the like after each separate petition in the Lord's Prayer, or after all, as : *Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. But when, O Heavenly Father, shall Thy Name be known, honoured, and glorified by all the world? When, my God? when?* And so after the other petitions.

Fourthly, when imploring graces and virtues, it were well to consider frequently the value of the virtue and thy great need of it; the greatness and goodness of God and thy own demerits. So wilt thou pray with stronger desires and affections, with greater confidence and reverence, and with greater humility.

Lastly, consider the end of thy petition,—that it be to please God and to honour Him.

XIV.—OF ANOTHER METHOD OF PRAYER.

ANOTHER most perfect method of prayer is, to place thyself silently in the presence of God, breathing from time to time sighs to Him, turning thine eyes to Him with a heart longing to please Him, and with a vivid and burning desire that He would help thee to love, honour, and serve Him sincerely ; or with a

simple desire that He would grant thee the grace thou hast asked for in thy former petitions.

XV.—OF THE FOURTH AID TO THE HUMAN WILL.

THE fourth aid to our will is Divine love, which so strengthens and assists it, that there is nothing it cannot do, no passion or temptation it cannot overcome.

The way to obtain this is, continually to ask it of God in prayer; and in our meditation to dwell upon those points which are most fitted, by the grace of God, to enkindle it within our earthly human hearts. Such are the following:

Who God is. What and how great are His wisdom, power, goodness, and beauty.

What God has done for man; and what more, if needful, He would have done for him.

With what love He did it.

What He does for man daily. What He will do for him in the next life, if in this he obeys His precepts with a pure intention to please Him.

XVI.—OF MEDITATION ON GOD.

God, who hath perfect knowledge of Himself, revealed what He is when He answered and said: *Ego sum qui sum*,—I am Who am.

And that which is here said of God cannot be affirmed of any creature whatsoever; neither of princes, kings, nor emperors, nor of angels, nor of all creation together; because all these have a being dependent upon God, and are in themselves a mere nothing.

And hence appears the vanity of that man

who loves creatures, and attaches himself to them, instead of only loving the Creator in them, and the creatures only in accordance with the will of that same Lord.

That man, I say, is vain, because he loves vanities. He is vain, because he seeks satisfaction in things which have no being in themselves. He is vain, because he toils for the possession of those things which, when possessed, rob and slay their possessors.

If, then, thou wouldst love rightly, love God, who fills and satisfies the soul.

XVII.—OF MEDITATION ON THE POWER OF GOD.

WE know that if not one power only, but all worldly powers combined, were desirous of erecting, not kingdoms or cities, but one single palace, they would require various materials, various workmen, and a long space of time, nor would they, after all, be able to rear an edifice entirely to their mind.

But God, by His power, created the whole universe in an instant out of nothing. And with the same ease He could create, destroy, and reduce to nothing an infinite number of worlds.

The more profoundly we meditate upon this point, the more fresh motives shall we discover for wondering admiration, the more incentives to love so mighty a Lord.

XVIII.—OF MEDITATION ON THE WISDOM OF GOD.

THE wisdom of God is too high and inscrutable for any created mind to comprehend. Yet, to acquire some little knowledge of it, cast thine

eyes upon the glory of heaven, upon the loveliness of the earth and of the whole universe ; for thou wilt find therein nothing but the incomprehensible wisdom of the Divine Architect.

Reflect upon the life of man, and the various accidents which accompany it ; for there is nothing, however disordered, but in the light of God's countenance is inscrutable wisdom. Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God ! How incomprehensible are His judgments !

XIX.—OF MEDITATION ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

THE goodness of God is, like all His other infinite perfections, in itself incomprehensible ; but so great is it even in its outward manifestations, that there is no created thing wherein it is not to be found.

Creation is from the goodness of God. Providence is from the goodness of God. In redemption we perceive how great and ineffable is His goodness, in that He has given us herein His only-begotten Son to be our ransom, and also to be our daily food in the Sacrament of the Altar.

XX.—OF MEDITATION ON THE BEAUTY OF GOD.

OF the beauty of God suffice it to say, that it is such and so great, that contemplating Himself unchangeably from eternity, God remains incomprehensibly blessed and satisfied in His infinite capacity.

Know then, O man, the dignity to which, by God's goodness, thou art called ; and be no

longer so dull of heart as to despise that goodness, and give thy love to vanity, lies, and shadows.

God invites thee to love His wisdom, His goodness, and His power; to delight thyself in His beauty, and to enter into His joy; and wilt thou turn a deaf ear?

Think, O, think upon thy ways; lest the hour come upon thee wherein repentance shall be unavailing.

**XXI.—WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR MAN, AND WITH WHAT LOVE:
AND WHAT MORE HE WOULD HAVE DONE IF NEEDFUL.**

WHAT God has done *to* man and *for* man may be known by meditating on creation and redemption.

But the love with which He created him, and wrought out his salvation, was more than infinite.

For infinite, indeed, was the price of redemption; but the love which paid it was greater still; for He would willingly have suffered more and have died many times.

If, then, in requital for thy redemption, thou owest thy whole self over and over again, what owest thou not for the love of God towards thee, which surpasses and exceeds the ransom itself?

XXII.—WHAT GOD DOES FOR MAN DAILY.

THERE is not a day nor a moment in which man receives not new blessings from God; for He is creating him every day and every moment, inasmuch as He is preserving him in being. Every moment does God minister to

him through His creatures—the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is therein.

Every day does He bestow His grace upon him, calling him from evil to good, guarding him from sin, and if he have sinned, aiding him to sin no more. He waits for him ; He invites him to penance ; and when he turns to Him, is more ready to forgive than man to seek forgiveness.

Every day does He send to him His Son, with all the treasures of the mystery of the Cross, making Him to be ever present with him in the Sacrament of the Altar.

XXIII.—OF GOD'S GOODNESS IN AWAITING AND BEARING WITH THE SINNER.

IN order to comprehend the extent of God's goodness in bearing with the sinner, consider first, that as His love of holiness is unspeakable, so, on the contrary, is His hatred of sin infinite.

What great goodness, then, does He show in bearing with the sinner, who commits so many sins in the presence of His majesty and purity, not once, nor twice, nor thrice, but over and over again !

I see clearly, O Lord, (may the sinner say) that when I sinned, Thou didst speak thus to my heart : Let us see which of us two will overcome,—thou in offending Me, or I in pardoning thee.

This point, if well considered, will, I think, by God's grace, so enkindle the sinner's heart, as to make him turn speedily to God.

But if not, he will have great reason to fear

God's high and inscrutable judgments, whence oftentimes issue most sudden, tremendous, and irremediable strokes of vengeance.

XXIV.—WHAT GOD WILL DO IN THE LIFE TO COME, NOT ONLY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ALWAYS SERVED HIM, BUT FOR THE CONVERTED SINNER.

THE favours and blessings bestowed by God in the heavenly country are so many and so great, that here they cannot be conceived, nor do we even know how to desire them.

Who shall ever arrive at the full understanding of what it is for man to sit down at the table of God, while He ministers to him, and nourishes him with His own beatitude?

Who can conceive what it is for the souls of the blessed to enter into the joy of their Lord?

And who can even comprehend the love and honour shown by God to the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem? of which St. Thomas thus speaks: *Almighty God subjects Himself to each of His angels and to holy souls, as if He were the hired servant of each, and each of them were His God.*

O Lord, O Lord! he who meditates deeply on Thy dealings with Thy creatures finds Thee to be so inebriated with love, that Thine own beatitude seems to consist in loving them, doing them good, and nourishing them with Thyself.

O Lord, do Thou so impress this consideration on our hearts, that we may love Thee, and by this love may be made one with Thee by a loving union!

O heart of man! whither dost thou run?

after a shadow ! after the wind ! after nothing ! —leaving that which is all in all, Almighty Power, Consummate Wisdom, Ineffable Goodness, Uncreated Beauty, the Supreme Good, and the Boundless Ocean of all perfection ! He pursues thee, calling thee to Himself with many strong cries, by many new blessings, and by the memory of many received in time past.

Knowest thou the source of this thy great misery ? Thou dost not pray ; thou dost not meditate. Thou hast, therefore, neither light nor heat ; what marvel that thou canst not cast away the works of darkness ?

Enter at last, O careless soul ! O lukewarm religious ! enter into this school of meditation and prayer ; for here thou wilt learn by experience that the true study of the Christian and the religious is, to learn to deny his own will, that he may do the will of God, and hate himself, that he may love God ; and that without this all other studies (be they of all the sciences together) are but the fuel of pride and presumption ; and the more they enlighten the understanding, the more do they darken the will, to the destruction of the souls of those who acquire them.

XXV.—OF THE FIFTH AID TO THE HUMAN WILL.

HATRED of self is a most necessary aid to our will ; for without it we shall never obtain the help of divine love, the source of all good.

The way to obtain it, is, first to ask it of God, and then to meditate upon the many evils which are and have been brought upon man by self-love.

No evil has ever arisen in heaven or earth but from this source.

So malignant is the nature of this love of self, that could it possibly find an entrance into heaven, it would at once change the celestial Jerusalem into a Babylon. Consider, then, what this pestilence works in a human heart, and in this present life. Take self-love out of the world, and the gates of hell would close of their own accord.

Who, then, will so sin against himself as to meditate thus upon the essence, quality, and effects of self-love, and not abhor and detest it ?

XXVI.—HOW TO DETECT SELF-LOVE.

THAT thou mayest learn how wide and extensive is the dominion of self-love within thee, examine frequently by which of the passions of the soul thy will is chiefly occupied ; for thou wilt not find it free from all.

Finding, then, that it loves or desires, is joyful or sorrowful, consider next whether the object loved or desired be holy, and in accordance with the law of God ; and so of joy or grief, whether these affections be produced by such things as God would have us to be glad or sorry for ; or whether they spring from the world, and from attachment to creatures, which will be shown by their lingering about them, and being occupied with them more than the occasion necessarily requires, or than God wills.

If this be so, it is plain that self-love sways thy will, and is its moving spring. But if thy will be busied and occupied with things good

in themselves and in accordance with the will of God, thou must next examine whether it be influenced thereto by the will of God, or by some caprice or liking of its own ; for a man may oftentimes be moved by some such caprice or liking to give himself up to many good works, such as prayers, fasts, communions, and other holy exercises.

This may be proved in two ways. First, if thy will does not apply itself, as occasion offers, to all good works indifferently. And secondly, if, when crossed by hindrances, it laments itself, is troubled and disquieted ; or if, when successful, it is filled with self-complacency or self-gratulation.

But if the will be moved by God, thou must further consider to what end and purpose its operations are mostly directed. For if the end be simply to please God, it is so far well ; yet not so that we may therefore feel secure—so subtle a thing is self-love, and so prone to lurk in all good works and religious exercises. When this most cruel monster shows itself, it must be hunted to death with the utmost abhorrence, and that no less in small matters than in great.

Be ever suspicious of its lurking presence. Humble thyself, therefore, after every good work, smiting upon thy breast, and beseeching God to forgive thee, and to free thee from all self-love.

It will be well, therefore, early in the morning to turn to the Lord, and declare to Him thy purpose never again to offend Him, especially for the coming day, but in all things to do His divine will, and that solely in order to

please Him. To this end, beseech Him earnestly to assist thee at all times, and to keep His hand upon thy head, that thou mayest know and do all such things as please Him, and in the way which pleases Him best.

XXVII.—OF THE SIXTH AID.

THE hearing of Mass is the sixth aid to the human will: and to this is added Confession and Communion. For the grace of God being the chief and needful aid to our will, to enable it to avoid evil and do good, it follows that all things which bring increase of grace are aids to the will.

To obtain an increase of grace in hearing Mass, thou shouldst hear it in the following manner :

In the first part (for the Mass is divided into three), which extends from the Introit to the Offertory, strive to enkindle within thyself a great desire, that as the Son of God came down from heaven and was born into the world that He might enkindle on this our earth the fire of His love, so He would deign to come and be born by His power in thy inmost heart, that it may burn with His love, and that thou mayest have no thought throughout thy whole life but how to please Him always and for ever.

When the priest is saying the prayers, ask the same graces for thy poor and needy soul, with a burning desire to receive them.

And when he begins the Epistle and the Gospel, ask of God understanding to know their meaning, and strength to observe it fully.

In the second part, from the Offertory to

the Communion, withdraw thy mind from all attachment to creatures and to thyself, offering thyself wholly to God to do all His will.

At the elevation of the consecrated Host and Chalice, adore there present the true Body and Blood of Christ, together with all His Divinity. Contemplating Him thus hidden under these accidents of bread and wine, return Him loving thanks that He vouchsafes to come to us daily with these precious fruits of the tree of His Cross; and with the same offering which He made of Himself crucified to His heavenly Father, and to the same ends, offer thyself also to the same Father.

Then, when the priest communicates sacramentally, do thou communicate spiritually, opening thy heart to Him, and closing it to all creatures, that the Lord may enkindle therein the fire of His love.

In the third and last part, ask together with the priest, thou with the heart and he with the lips, what is asked for in the prayers after Communion.

XXVIII.—OF SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION.

IN order to receive a great augmentation of grace in communicating, thou hast need of the holiest dispositions; and as we cannot have them of ourselves, the following prayer should be said with great devotion :

“ Visit, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and cleanse our consciences, that our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, when He cometh with all His Saints, may find in us a mansion prepared for Himself, who with Thee, &c.”

But, that we fail not on our part to do something in conjunction with the Divine aid, let thy preparation be to consider, first, to what end Christ instituted the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. And finding that it was in order that we should remember the love manifested towards us by Him in the mysteries of His Passion, consider, further, to what end He wills this commemoration. And this end being that we should love and obey Him, our best preparation will be an ardent desire and will to attain this love and obedience, sorrowing that in time past we have not loved, but offended Him. And with this ardent desire and will to love Him, we must prepare ourselves against the time of Communion.

At the time of Communion, make a lively act of faith, that there, under the accidents of the consecrated bread, is the true Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Adore Him profoundly, and beseech Him to take away from thy heart every sin, even the most hidden, which lurks there; and receive Him with a lively hope that He will give thee His love.

When thou hast received Him into thine heart, ask Him over and over again for His love, and for every other needful gift, in order to please Him. Next offer Him to thy Heavenly Father as a thank-offering for His immense charity, shown to us in this and all the other blessings of redemption, and to obtain the gift of His love, and for the needs of the living and the dead.

XXIX.—OF SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION.

MANY things are requisite to a good confession.

First, a close examination of conscience upon the commandments of God and the duties of our state.

And when thou hast discovered thy sins, weep over them bitterly, though they be but venial ; considering the offence offered to the majesty of God, and man's ingratitude for His love and goodness. Condemn, therefore, and reprove thyself in these words: "Is it thus thou requitest the Lord, O foolish and unwise? Is not He thy Father, to whom thou belongest, and who formed and created thee?"

And renewing in thy heart again and again an ardent wish that thou hadst never offended Him, say: "O, that I had never offended Thee, my Creator, my Heavenly Father, my Redeemer! would that I had rather endured all other evil!"

Then, turning to God with deep confusion and lively faith that He will pardon thee, say to Him with thy whole heart, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am not now worthy to be called Thy son ; make me as one of Thy hired servants."

And renewing again thy sorrow for having offended God, and thy resolution rather to bear any suffering than wilfully to offend Him again, confess thy sins with great shame and grief to thy confessor, just as they were committed, without excusing thyself, or accusing others.

After confession, return thanks to God, that

though thou hast so many and many a time offended Him, He is ever more ready to pardon than the sinner to receive forgiveness.

And finding herein fresh cause for sorrow at having offended so loving a Father, resolve, with a fuller determination than ever, that by His help thou wilt never offend Him more; invoking also the aid of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of thine angel guardian, and of thy patron saint.

XXX.—HOW TO OVERCOME THE VICE OF IMPURITY.

ALL other passions are to be overcome by meeting them in open warfare, even at the risk of being wounded, and by challenging them again and again to battle, till we have subdued them in every movement, whether great or small.

But we must not only refrain from exciting this vice of impurity, but carefully avoid every thing which may have a tendency in any way to excite it.

The temptation of the flesh is overcome, and impure passion mortified, by flight, and not by open resistance.

He, then, who flies fastest and farthest is surest of victory.

Good habits, sincere intentions, past trials and victories, relationship, or insignificance and homeliness of person, which seem not to threaten danger, or whatever else appears to promise security,—none of these are good arguments against flight. Fly, fly, beloved soul, if thou wouldst not be taken captive.

For if some have escaped falling, in spite of a lifelong intercourse with most dangerous per-

sons, this concerns not thee, but belongs to the judgment of God ; besides, the falls which are unseen are oftentimes most fatal. Fly, in obedience to the advice given thee by God in Holy Scripture, in the lives of so many eminent saints, and daily in those of persons around us.

Fly, fly, without looking back to see or to think of the object from which thou art flying ; for here too there is danger lest thou turn back again.

And if obliged to enter into conversation, let thine intercourse be brief and passing, and thy speech rather blunt than courteous ; for here also are snares, fire, and flame. Here the following counsel holds good : Before the illness use the medicine.

Wait not till thou fall sick, but fly betimes ; for flight is the only safe medicine.

And if unhappily the sickness overtake thee, thy whole safety depends upon this, that as soon as thou dost perceive it, thou take thy little ones and dash them against the rock (*tu teneas et allidas parrulos tuos ad petram*) ; then hasten to thy confessor, conceal not from him even the slightest venial sin arising from this passion ; for if concealed, it will sprout up more, and gain increased strength.

XXXI.—HOW MANY THINGS ARE TO BE AVOIDED LEST THOU FALL INTO THIS SIN.

THERE are many things to be avoided, if we would not give wings to the arrow of unlawful passion.

First, and chiefly, those persons who are manifestly dangerous ; secondly, as far as possible,

others also. Thirdly, visits, messages, presents, intercourse, even though distant; for what is distant may more easily be rendered intimate than what has once become intimate be made distant. Fourthly, conversations upon this subject, music, songs, and immodest books. Fifthly (which is but little known or heeded, and still less practised), all delight in the things of this world, as clothes, various articles which are kept in the rooms of worldly people for ease and luxury, dainty fare, and other indulgences, which, though for the most part innocent in themselves, yet accustom our hearts to please themselves, and make them crave for pleasure. Hence, when tempted by unlawful gratification, which of its own nature is quick to wound and pierces even to the marrow of the bones, we can scarce find courage to mortify ourselves, having never practised mortification at other times.

On the contrary, a heart accustomed to shun lawful pleasures will fly from the very name of those which are unlawful and sinful.

XXXII.—WHAT IS TO BE DONE IF THOU SHOULDST FALL INTO THE SIN OF IMPURITY.

If through misfortune, or even through malice, thou shouldst fall into this sin of the flesh, the remedy, unless thou wouldst add sin to sin, is to fly at once, and without farther examination of conscience, to confession; and discarding all human prudence, speak plainly, and lay open all thy sickness, taking whatever advice and medicine may be given thee, however bitter and painful.

Delay not, though there be a hundred or a thousand reasons for delay ; for if thou delay, thou wilt fall again ; by reason of that second fall, other delays will arise ; so that delays causing relapses, and relapses new delays, years will pass away before thou hast confessed and forsaken the sin.

To conclude, then, I counsel thee once more, if thou wouldst avoid this grievous sin, to fly lest thou fall.

And if impure thoughts, no matter how slight, come into thy mind, regard them no less seriously, and fly from them no less speedily, than from the greater.

And although, from having instantly rejected them, thou feelest assured that they were only light offences, still confess them, and make known thine enemy to thy confessor. And if thou shouldst have fallen, fly at once to confession ; never suffering thyself to be overcome by shame.

XXXIII.—OF SOME MOTIVES FOR THE SINNER'S SPEEDY CONVERSION TO GOD.

THE first motive for the sinner's return to God is, the consideration of God Himself, whom, as the supreme good, consummate power, and wisdom, and goodness, man should never have dared to offend. Not in prudence ; for it is an evil choice to dispute with the Almighty, and with the Supreme Judge, by whom he shall be judged : nor yet in justice and fitness ; for it is most intolerable for a mere nothing, a handful of dust, a creature, to offend his Crea-

tor, a servant his lord, an object of bounty his benefactor, a son his father.

The second motive is, the sinner's deep obligation to return speedily to his Father's house. For the conversion of the son, and his return home, is the occasion of honour to the father, and of joy to all the household and neighbours, and to the angels of heaven.

For, as at first the son offended and angered the father by his sin, so by his return with bitter tears for his offences, and stedfast resolution in future to obey all his commands in all things, he so honours and delights his father, so wounds his heart with love, and moves it to compassion, that, not content to wait for him with longing expectation, he runs to meet him, falls on his neck and kisses him, and clothes him with his grace and with all his other gifts.

The third motive is self-interest; for the sinner should consider, that if he turn not from his evil way in time, the winter and the Sabbath-day are certainly approaching, and he will be cast for ever into the flames of hell; for were there no other torment to be feared than the infinite increase of those passions which hold him in bondage to sin, without a hope of being able so much as to dip the tip of his finger in those waters in which he delights, this thought alone were sufficient to fill him with terror.

Nor is it well to trust to intentions of conversion at the close of life, or at the end of some years or months; for such purposes are foolish, and full of grievous impiety. It is a sign of great folly to purpose the overcoming

of a great difficulty at the time of greatest weakness.

The sinner who continues in sin becomes every day less capable of conversion, both from the evil habit, which gradually strengthens till it changes into nature, and from increasing unwillingness to receive the grace of conversion ; and also because, by the wicked impiety of clinging as long as possible to the creature, and then, late in life, or at the very last breath, giving himself from self-interest to God, he has so provoked His wrath as to take from Him at last the will to aid him effectually.

Again, such a purpose and intention only befits a madman ; for, even supposing him still to be capable of conversion, and that effectual grace should be granted to him, who has assured the sinner, or who can assure him, that meanwhile he may not die suddenly and without the use of speech, as has happened and does happen to so many ?

Cry then aloud, O sinner, even while thou art reading, cry to thy Lord, saying : Convert me, and I shall be converted, for Thou art the Lord my God.

Nor ever cease calling upon Him until thou be converted to thy Lord and Father, weeping bitterly over thine offence against Him, and meekly resigning thyself to whatever satisfaction He shall be pleased to require of thee.

XXXIV.—HOW TO OBTAIN THE GIFT OF TEARS FOR THINE OFFENCES AGAINST GOD, AND THE GRACE OF CONVERSION.

THERE is no better way to obtain the gift of tears for thine offences against God than me-

dition on His goodness, and the love which He has shown to man.

For if thou consider that by sin he has offended Him Who is supreme goodness and ineffable love, Who is ever doing good, Who has never done nor can do aught but good, pouring down His graces and giving His light both to friends and foes ; and consider, moreover, that thou hast offended Him for a mere nothing, a caprice, or a little false pleasure, thou canst not fail to weep bitterly.

Place thyself, then, before a crucifix, and imagine that it speaks thus to thee : *Aspice in Me*,—look upon Me, and consider My wounds, one by one ; for because of thy sins have I been thus wounded and ill-treated, even as thou seest. And yet I am thy God, thy Creator, thy merciful Lord and compassionate Father. *Revertere ad Me*,—return, then, to Me with holy tears, with an ardent desire that thou hadst never offended Me, and with a perfect will to endure any suffering which may preserve thee from ever offending Me again. *Revertere ad Me, quoniam redemi te*,—return to Me, for I have redeemed thee.

Then, setting Christ before thine imagination with the crown of thorns on His head, the reed in His hand, and covered with wounds, think that He says to thee, *Ecce Homo*,—behold the Man, who, loving thee with unspeakable love, hath redeemed thee through these sufferings, even by His blood. *Ecce Homo*,—this is the Man whom thou hast offended, in spite of so much love and so many benefits conferred upon thee. *Ecce Homo*,—this Man is the mercy of

God and plenteous redemption. This Man offers Himself and all His merits for thee to the Father every hour and every moment. This Man, sitting at the right hand of the Father, intercedes for thee as thine advocate. Wherefore, then, dost thou offend Me? Why wilt thou not return? Return to Me, because I have blotted out thy iniquities as a cloud, and as a little cloud thy sins.

XXXV.—SOME REASONS WHY MEN LIVE WITHOUT WEeping OVER THEIR SINS AGAINST GOD, WITHOUT HOLINESS, AND WITHOUT CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

THERE are many reasons why man slumbers on in lukewarmness, neither forsaking sin, nor devoting himself to holiness as he should do; among others are the following:

Because he abides not within himself, to see what goes on in the house of his soul, and who possesses it; but with a wandering and curious mind wastes his life in the pursuit of vanity. And even if he be occupied with things good and lawful in themselves, even with such as relate to holiness and Christian perfection, yet he gives not his mind to them. And if at times he does, and perceives his misery, and is called and inspired by God to change his life, he answers, *Cras, cras; Presently, presently.* But *to-morrow* never becomes *to-day*, nor does *presently* become *now*; because through this evil custom of *to-morrow, presently*, each *to-day* and each *now*, when present, brings forth a new *to-morrow* and another *presently*.

Nor are others wanting, who, believing that a real change of life and the practice of virtue consist in certain devotions, spend almost all

the day in saying Pater Nosters and Ave Marias, without ever setting to work to mortify those disorderly passions which keep them in bondage to creatures.

Others give themselves up to exercises of virtue, but build without a foundation ; for every virtue has its proper foundation. For instance, humility is founded on the desire to be little or nothing accounted of, to be despised by others, and to be vile in its own sight. He, then, who lays this foundation afterwards gladly receives the stones of the building of humility ; which are slights from others, and occasions of making acts of humility. Thus, increasing in the desire to be vilely esteemed, and willingly receiving slights from others, he grows in the grace of humility ; above all, asking it continually of God, in virtue of the humiliation of His Son.

But there are some persons who do all this, and yet not always from love of virtue, or to please God.

Hence the acts of this virtue produce not with them the same effects among all persons and in all places ; they will be humble with some, and proud with others ; humble before some, and proud before those whose good opinion does not promote their designs.

There are others, who, desiring Christian perfection, seek it by their own strength, which is utter weakness, or by their own industry and spiritual exercises, and not from God in distrust of self ; and so they go backward rather than forward.

Nor are there wanting those who, having

but just entered upon the way of holiness, begin immediately to fancy that they have attained to perfection; and so, having become vain in themselves, their virtues become also vain.

Wouldst thou, then, acquire Christian virtue and perfection, thou must in the first place distrust thyself; next trust in God, and endeavour to enkindle within thyself as much as possible the desire to advance therein day by day.

Be watchful also to let no opportunity, great or small, escape thee of exercising any virtue; and if thou shouldst have let any slip, fail not to inflict some chastisement on thyself.

And however great may be thy progress towards perfection, account thyself each day to be but beginning, and study to perform the first action before thee with as much perfection as if perfection consisted in it alone; and so with the second, the third, and all that follow. Avoid little defects as carefully as the most diligent avoid the greater.

Embrace virtue for virtue's sake, and in order to please God; so wilt thou be the same at all times, whether alone or with others. And thou wilt thus learn at times to leave virtue for virtue, and God for God. Turn neither to the right, nor to the left, nor back again.

Be discreet, love solitude, meditation, and prayer, earnestly beseeching God to bestow on thee the virtue and perfection which thou art seeking after, because God is the Fountain of all virtues, and is Himself the perfection to which He is hourly calling us.

XXXVI.—OF LOVE FOR OUR ENEMIES.

THOUGH Christian perfection consists in perfect obedience to the commands of God, yet does it chiefly depend upon the precept to love our enemies ; so fully does this precept harmonise with the mind of God.

If, then, thou wouldst arrive speedily at this perfection, try to observe strictly what Christ enjoins in His command to love our enemies. Love them, do them good, and pray for them, not coldly and formally, but with such overflowing affection, that thy heart, being emptied of self, may be wholly given to love and prayer for them.

Do them good ; be watchful that in nothing relating to the welfare of the soul they may ever receive injury from thee, but always show by gesture, word, and deed, that thou dost love and prize them, and art ever ready to serve them.

As to temporal benefits, thou must be guided by what prudence and judgment shall teach thee, having regard to the state and condition of thine enemies, thy own position, and the opportunities afforded thee.

If thou wilt attend to this precept, peace and holiness will flow in large measure into thine heart.

Nor is it so difficult as some suppose. It is hard indeed to nature ; but to him who desires and is watchful to subdue the movements of nature and of hatred it will become easy, bringing with it a hidden but most sweet peace and facility. But to assist thy weakness, thou mayest have recourse to four most powerful aids.

One is prayer; frequently to implore of Christ this gift of love, in virtue of that infinite charity by which, when hanging on the cross, He thought first of His enemies, next of His Mother, and last of Himself.

The second will be to say to thyself: "It is my Lord's command that I should love my enemies; therefore I needs must do so."

The third, that seeing in them the lively image of God, who impressed it on them in creation, thou mayest excite thyself to love and reverence it.

The fourth, that beholding further the inestimable price at which Christ redeemed them, which was neither gold nor silver, but His own blood, thou shouldst use every endeavour that it be not shed in vain, wasted and trampled under foot.

XXXVII.—OF EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

EXAMINATION of conscience is usually made by diligent souls three times a day; before dinner, before vespers, and before bed-time. But if this cannot be done by all, the evening examination at least should never be neglected. For if God twice looked upon the works He had done for man, shall not man look more than once upon what he does for God, and for which moreover he must give Him a strict account?

The examination should be made after the following manner. First, ask light of God to know all thine interior and all thy works. Then consider how far thou hast kept thy heart recollected and enclosed, and how thou hast

guarded it. Next, see how thou hast obeyed God during the past day in all the opportunities which He has given thee of serving Him. I will add nothing more; for this third consideration includes the state and obligations of every individual.

After thanking God for any good work performed, or any correspondence with grace received, dismiss it wholly from thy mind, esirring to begin thy course as if hitherto thou hadst done nothing. As to failings, faults, and sins, turn to God, and say to Him, in grief at having offended Him :

“Lord, I have done this of myself; nor should I have stopped even here, if Thy right hand had not upheld me : therefore do I give thanks to Thee. And now, Lord, I beseech Thee, in the Name of Thy Beloved Son, do that which belongs to Thee,—forgive me, and give me grace never to offend Thee more.”

And then do penance for thy faults, and as a spur to amendment, mortify thy will in some little thing which is allowable : for this is well-pleasing to Him. Mortify thy body in the same way ; and do not neglect these penitential acts, lest the searching into thy conscience become from thy negligent use of it a mere fruitless and empty form.

XXXVIII.—TWO RULES FOR LIVING IN PEACE.

ALTHOUGH he who lives according to what has been thus far laid down will never fail to live in peace, I will in this last chapter give thee two rules, which are, indeed, comprehended in the preceding, by the observation of which thou

mayest live with all possible peace and quietness in this wicked world.

The first is, to endeavour with all diligence to close the door of thy heart more and more entirely against all desires. For desires are the principal beam of the Cross, and the sources of all disquietude, which will be oppressive in proportion to the vehemence of the desire. And if the desires be many and various, the heavier will be the beams, and the more numerous the crosses awaiting thee. Then follow difficulties and hindrances in the way of the fulfilment of these desires; and there we have the transverse beam, the cross of the cross, to which the longing soul is nailed.

Let him, then, who would avoid the cross, also avoid desires; and if he find himself on the cross, let him give up the desire; for as soon as he renounces the desire, he shall be taken down. There is no other remedy.

The other rule is this. When thou art offended or annoyed by others, suffer not thy thoughts to dwell upon the annoyance, or on any thing connected with it. For example, that these persons ought not so to have treated thee, who they are, or what they think themselves, or the like; for all this is like fuel to kindle the fire of wrath, anger, and hatred.

But have instant recourse in such cases to the power and the commands of God, that thou mayest learn what to do, lest perchance thou fall into more grievous error than they. So shalt thou return into the path of holiness and peace.

For if thou canst not treat thyself aright,

what marvel if others know not how to treat thee ?

And if thou wouldst avenge thyself upon those who offend thee, thou shouldst first take vengeance upon thyself, who art thine own most deadly enemy.

OF INWARD PEACE;

OR,

THE PATH TO PARADISE.

CH. I.—WHAT IS THE NATURE OF OUR HEART, AND HOW IT
SHOULD BE GOVERNED.

THY heart was created by God for this end alone,—to be loved and possessed by Him. And by means of this love thou mayest do what thou wilt with it; and all things, however difficult, will thus become most easy to thee. The first thing, then, which thou hast to do, is so to fix and establish the intention of thy heart, that the exterior may flow from the interior. For although corporal penances, and all exercises by which the flesh is chastised and afflicted, are praiseworthy, when moderated by discretion, according to the circumstances of those who use them, yet by such means alone thou wilt never acquire a single virtue, but rather vanity and the wind of vain-glory; and all thy labour will be lost, unless these exercises be quickened and regulated by the interior.

The life of man is nothing else but continual warfare and temptation ; and because of this warfare, thou must watch continually, and keep a guard upon thy heart, that it may be always tranquil and at peace. And if any movement of sensual disturbance arise within thy soul, take heed to calm it instantly ; stilling thy heart, and suffering it not to wander after any of these things. Do this when even any thing arises to disquiet thee, whether in prayer or at any other time ; and know that thou wilt have learned to pray aright when thou hast learned to act after this manner. But observe, all this must be done with great sweetness and without effort. In short, the chief and constant exercise of thy life should be to quiet thy heart, and never suffer it to go astray.

CH. II.—OF THE CARE WE SHOULD TAKE TO ACQUIRE A PEACEFUL SPIRIT.

ABOVE all things, then, endeavour to place this sentinel of peace over all thy feelings ; it will enable thee to do great things without any labour, nay, with great tranquillity and serenity ; and with the aid of this sentinel given thee by God, thou shalt so watch over thyself, as to be enabled to pray, to obey, to humble thyself, and to suffer injuries without disquietude.

It is most true, that before thou canst attain to this peace thou wilt have to endure much labour from want of practice ; but afterwards thy soul will derive great consolation from whatever contradiction may arise to cross it,

and thou wilt daily learn more and more perfectly this exercise of quieting thy spirit. And if at times thou shouldst be so disturbed and troubled as to seem unable to pacify thyself, have immediate recourse to prayer; and persevere therein in imitation of Christ our Lord, who prayed three times in the garden, to give thee an example that prayer must be thy only refuge and resource, and that, however sorrowful and fainthearted thou mayest feel, thou must not give over until thou feel thy will entirely conformed to the will of God, and consequently devout and full of peace, yea, moreover, wholly inspirited and emboldened to receive and embrace what at first it feared and abhorred; going out to meet it saying, Arise, let us go, behold he is at hand who will betray Me.

CH. III.—HOW BY DEGREES THIS PEACEFUL HABITATION IS TO BE BUILT UP.

TAKE care, as I have said, never to let thy heart be troubled, nor to meddle with things which may disquiet it, but strive ever to keep it calm; for so will the Lord build up in thy soul a city of peace, and thy heart shall be a house of pleasures and delights. This only does He require of thee, that whenever thy heart is troubled thou shouldst set thyself anew to calm and quiet thyself in all thy thoughts and works. For as a city is not built in a day, neither in a day must thou expect to attain this interior peace; for this is nothing less than to build a house to the Lord, and a tabernacle to the Most High, making thyself His temple; and the Lord Himself must be the builder of

this house, else will thy labour be in vain. Remember also, that the whole first foundation of this exercise must be humility.

CH. IV.—THAT THE SOUL MUST REFUSE ALL CONSOLATION; FOR THIS IS THE TRUE HUMILITY AND POVERTY OF SPIRIT BY WHICH THIS PEACE IS ACQUIRED.

WOULDST thou, then, enter by this gate of humility (for other entrance there is none), thou must toil and strive, especially at the beginning, to embrace tribulations and contradictions as dear sisters, desiring to be despised by all, and to have none to favour thee or comfort thee but thy God alone. Fix and impress upon thy heart that God alone is thy good and thy only refuge, and that all other things are thorns: woe unto thee if thou press them to thy heart! And if some insults should be offered to thee, be glad thereof, and bear it joyfully, knowing for certain that God is now with thee. Neither shouldst thou desire nor ever seek after any other honour but to suffer for love of Him and whatever tends to His greater glory. Try to rejoice when others use injurious words to thee, or reprove or despise thee; for a rich treasure lies hid beneath this dust; and if thou take it willingly, thou wilt soon find thyself rich without the knowledge even of those who have enriched thee. Never seek to be loved or esteemed by any in this life; that thou mayest be left free to suffer with Christ crucified without any to hinder thee. Be on thy guard against thyself, as thine own worst enemy. Follow not thy own will, thy own mind, thy own opinion, if thou wouldst not

destroy thyself. To this end, thou hast need of weapons to defend thee from thyself; and whenever thy will would incline to any thing, however holy, lay it first alone, and naked, and with deep humility, before the Lord, beseeching Him that not thy will but His may be done therein; and this with desires wholly mortified and free from all admixture of self-love, knowing that of thyself thou hast nothing and canst do nothing. Beware of thine own conceits, which bear with them a semblance of sanctity and indiscreet zeal, of which the Lord says, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves; by their fruits you shall know them." Their fruits are, to leave within the soul anxiety and disquiet. All things which lead thee away from humility and from this inward peace and quietness, under what colour or semblance soever, are false prophets, who, in sheep's clothing, that is, under colour of zeal, and of aiding thy neighbour indiscreetly, are ravening wolves, which prey upon thy humility, and upon that peace and quietness so necessary to all who wish to make certain progress. And the greater the appearance of holiness in any thing, the more narrowly must it be examined into; and this, as has been said, with much repose and inward calmness. And if at any time thou shouldst fail, be not disquieted, but humble thyself before the Lord, acknowledge thy weakness, and learn a lesson for the future. For it may be God permits it in order to humble some pride which lies hid within thee, though thou knowest it not. If at

any time thou feel thy spirit wounded by some sharp and envenomed thorn, be not therefore disquieted ; but watch the more carefully, lest it enter further and penetrate within. Withdraw thy heart, and gently remove thy will into its abode of quietness and peace, keeping thy soul purely for God, whom thou wilt ever find within thee and in the depth of thy heart because of thine upright intention. And be well assured that all things happen in order to prove thee, that thou mayest be fitted to attain thy chief good, and merit the crown of justice laid up for thee by Infinite Mercy.

CH. V.—HOW THE SOUL SHOULD KEEP HERSELF IN MENTAL SOLITUDE, THAT GOD MAY WORK WITHIN HER.

ESTEEM, then, thine own soul very highly, because the Father of fathers and Lord of lords has chosen it for His own habitation. Esteem it so highly as never to suffer it to abase itself, or incline to any other object. Let all thy desire and hope be always for the coming of the Lord, who will not visit thy soul unless He find it alone. Think not that in the presence of others He will vouchsafe her a single word, save to threaten and leave her. He will have her to be free as much as possible from thoughts, absolutely free from desires, and much more from self-will. Yet must thou not indiscreetly impose penances upon thyself, nor seek opportunities of suffering for the love of God, under the sole guidance of thine own will ; but with the advice of thy spiritual father and of thy superiors, who govern thee in the place of God, who by their means disposes thy will and does

with it what He wills and as He wills. Yet thou art not to do what thou wilt, but to let God do in thee what He wills. Let thy will be always so disengaged from self that thou mayest not will any thing; and if thou dost will any thing, let it be so, that if the thing be not done according to thy will, but contrary to it, thou mayest feel no regret, but preserve as calm a spirit as if thou hadst willed nothing. The true liberty of the soul is to bind itself to nothing whatever.

If thou wilt give up thy soul to God thus free, solitary, and unfettered, thou wilt see what marvels He will work within thee. O admirable solitude and secret chamber of the Most High, where only He will give audience, and speak to the heart of the soul! O desert, now made Paradise; for there only does God vouchsafe to be seen and spoken with! I will go and I will see this great vision.

But if thou wouldst come hither, enter barefoot; for the ground is holy. First put off the shoes from thy feet, that is, the affections from thy soul, and leave it bare and free: carry neither purse nor scrip upon this road; for thou art to pursue nothing of this world, however sought after by others: neither salute any man; but fix all thy thoughts and affections upon God alone, and not upon creatures; leave the dead to bury their dead; go thy way alone to the land of the living, and let death have no part in thee.

CH. VI.—OF THE PRUDENCE WHEREWITH THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR SHOULD BE REGULATED, LEST IT DISTURB THIS PEACE.

EXPERIENCE itself, if thou wilt try it, will teach thee that this path of love and charity towards God and our neighbour is a plain and open way leading to eternal life. The Lord has said that He came to bring fire upon earth, and that His only desire was that it should be kindled. And although the love of God has no limit, it must not be so with the love of our neighbour; which, if not duly moderated, might do thee great injury, and lead thee, in order to gain others, to lose and destroy thyself.

Thou must so love thy neighbour as not thereby to injure thine own soul. Though thou art bound to set a good example, thou must never do any thing solely with this view, else thou wilt lose all benefit to thyself. Do all things with holy simplicity, without regard to any thing but to please God alone.

Humble thyself in all thy works, and thou wilt learn how little thou canst profit others thereby. Consider that thy fervour and zeal for souls must not be such as to cause thee to lose quiet and peace. Cherish an ardent thirst and desire that all men may know the truth which thou dost know and understand, and be inebriated with that wine which God promises to every one and gives without price.

This thirst for thy neighbour's salvation thou shouldst feel at all times; but it should spring from thy love to God, and not from indiscreet zeal.

It is God who must plant it in the solitude of

thy soul, and He must gather the fruit thereof when He will. Sow nothing of thyself, but offer the ground of thy heart cleared of every thing to God ; for then He will sow His own seed therein according to His good pleasure, and so shall it bring forth fruit. Remember always that He will have this soul of thine to be solitary and detached from all things, that He may unite it to Himself. Leave Him alone to choose thee ; impede Him not by thy free will. Sit thou still, without a thought of self, save how thou canst please God, waiting to be led to thy work ; for the Master of the house is already gone out seeking for labourers. Cast off all thought and care, strip thyself of all anxiety concerning self, and of all affection for earthly things, that God may clothe thee with Himself, and give thee what is beyond thy power to conceive. As far as possible forget self entirely, and let the love of God alone dwell in thy soul. From all that has been said draw this conclusion, that with all diligence, or rather without any anxious diligence, thou must temper and moderate thy zeal and fervour in order to retain God within thee in all tranquillity and peace ; so that thy soul lose not the store which is needful for itself by indiscreetly putting it out to interest for the sake of others. Such a silence as this is a strong cry in the ear of God ; such an idleness effects all things, and with such alone must thou traffic, if thou wouldst be rich towards God ; for this is nothing else but to resign thy soul to God, detached from all things. And thou must do this, moreover, without taking any merit to

thyself, or thinking that thou art doing any great thing ; for God does all, and on thy part He requires only that thou shouldst humble thyself before Him, and offer Him a heart wholly free and detached from earthly things, with an inward desire that His divine will may in all and through all be perfectly fulfilled in thee.

CH. VII.—HOW THE SOUL, STRIPPED OF HER OWN WILL, SHOULD PRESENT HERSELF BEFORE GOD.

THOU shouldst begin, then, in this way, sweetly and gradually trusting in that same Lord who calls thee, saying : “ Come unto Me all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you ; all you that thirst, come to the fountain.” This divine movement and vocation thou must follow, awaiting the impulse of the Holy Spirit to throw thyself blindly and resolutely into the ocean of this Divine Providence and eternal good pleasure, praying that it may be done in thee, and that thus thou mayest be borne onward resistlessly by the mighty waves of the Divine Will to the haven of thy own individual salvation and perfection.

Having made this act, which should be repeated a hundred thousand times a day, study and endeavour with all possible confidence, both interior and exterior, to pursue with the whole powers of thy mind such things as excite thee to praise, love, and long after God.

And let these acts be performed without using force or violence to thine heart, lest by an indiscreet exercise of them they seem to weaken, to harden, or perhaps to incapacitate

thee. Take the advice of the experienced, and try to accustom thyself to be always in desire, and when possible in act, engaged in the contemplation of God's goodness, and of His constant and loving bounty; and receive with humility the drops which will descend into thy soul from His inestimable goodness. Beware of trying to force thyself to tears or other marks of sensible devotion; but abide quietly in interior solitude until the will of God be wrought in thee; and when He gives thee tears, they shall be sweet without any labour or effort of thine own; accept them therefore with all gentleness and serenity, and above all, with all humility.

The key which unlocks the secrets of the spiritual treasury is the knowledge how to deny thyself at all times and in all things; and the same key will close the door against all insipidity and aridity of mind, which arises from our own fault; for that which comes from God is to be accounted among the other treasures of the soul.

Love to sit as much as possible with Mary at the feet of Christ, and listen to what the Lord says to thee. Suffer not thine enemies, the worst of whom is thyself, to rob thee of this holy silence. And when thine understanding goes forth in search of God, that it may find repose in Him, beware of drawing any limit or comparison with thy weak and narrow imagination; for He is infinitely beyond all comparison, who is through all and in all, and in whom all things are.

Him shalt thou find in thine inmost soul

whenever thou shalt search it faithfully, to find Him and not thyself. For His delight is to dwell with us the children of men, to render us worthy of Him, though He hath no need of us.

In meditation, do not so tie thyself down to certain points that thou wilt meditate upon nothing else ; but wherever thou shalt find rest, there stop and enjoy thy Lord, at whatever step of the way He shall be pleased to communicate Himself to thee. And though thou omit what thou hadst laid down, have no scruple ; for the sole end of these exercises is to enjoy the Lord ; yet not with the intention of making this enjoyment thy principal end, but rather to become more and more enamoured of His works, and to learn to imitate Him as nearly as possible.

Having found the end, disquiet thyself no longer about the means for attaining it. One of the hindrances to true peace and tranquillity is, the anxious thought we give to such works, binding the spirit, and dragging it after one thing or another, and thus insisting that God should lead it by the path we wish, and forcing it to walk along the road of our own imagining ; unconsciously caring more to do our own will herein than the will of our Lord ; which is nothing else than to seek God by flying from Him, and to wish to please God without doing His will.

If thou desire really to advance in this path, and to reach the desired end, thou must have no other purpose, no other wish, but to find God ; and wheresoever He is pleased to mani-

fest Himself to thee, there leave all else, and go no further till thou obtain permission; forget all things beside, and repose thyself in thy Lord. And when it shall please His Divine Majesty to withdraw and cease to manifest Himself in this way, turn then again to seek Him, continuing thy exercises; and always with the same purpose and desire, to find by these means Him whom thy soul loveth; and having found Him, leave, as we have said, all things, knowing that His desire is then fulfilled.

Consider this well; for many spiritual persons lose both peace and profit by wearying themselves over their exercises, fancying they do nothing unless they can complete them all, thinking that perfection consists in this making themselves proprietors of their own will; and to this end living a life of toil, as one who labours at a task, without ever attaining that true repose and interior peace in which the Lord truly rests and dwells.

CH. VIII.—OF THE FAITH WE OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR; AND OF THE OBLATION WE SHOULD MAKE OF OURSELVES TO THE LORD.

STUDY daily to exercise and strengthen in thy soul a faith in the most Holy Sacrament, and cease not to wonder at so incomprehensible a mystery, and to rejoice therein, considering how God manifests Himself under these humble and simple elements for thy greater merit: for "blessed are they who see not and yet believe." Desire not that in this life He should ever manifest Himself unto thee under any other form. Strive to enkindle thy will in Him, and to be

daily more and more ready to do His will always and in all things.

When thou offerest thyself to God in this sacrament thou must be willing and ready to suffer for His love all torments, pains, and injuries which may befall thee; all sickness, weariness, and aridities, whether in or out of prayer; considering that thou must endure all this repeatedly, and must take it in good part, being careful only not to be thyself the cause of it: but all thy delight must be to suffer with thy dear and loving Jesus, and for the love of Him. Be not inconstant in what thou dost undertake, desiring one thing to-day and another to-morrow, but be stedfast and persevering; and be assured that by using these means, yet always with the same sweetness we have described, thou wilt infallibly persevere unto the end; for thou wilt not be able to live an hour out of this peace: it would be an intolerable suffering to thee.

CH. IX.—THAT WE OUGHT NOT TO SEEK ENJOYMENT, NOR ANY THING WHICH GIVES CONSOLATION, BUT GOD ALONE.

ALWAYS choose hardness, and delight to be without the consolation of particular friendships and favours, which are unprofitable to the soul; and love to be ever subject to, and dependent upon, the will of others.

Let every thing be a means of leading thee to God, and let nothing be a hindrance to thee.

Be this thy consolation, that all things are bitter to thee, and God alone thy rest. Direct all thy labours to thy Lord; love Him, and give Him thy whole heart, and fear not but

that He will find a way to solve all thy doubts, and raise thee up when thou shalt fall. Lastly, in one word, if thou wilt love Him, thou shalt have every good.

Offer thyself as a sacrifice to God in peace and tranquillity of spirit ; and the better to proceed in this journey, and to support thyself without weariness and disquiet, dispose thy soul at every step, by expanding thy will, to meet the will of God. The more thou dost enlarge it, the more shalt thou receive.

Thy will must be thus disposed,—to will all things or to will nothing, as God wills or wills them not ; always and at each step to renew thy purpose to please God, and never in any matter to determine upon the course thou wilt pursue beyond the present moment, but to hold thyself at liberty.

No one, however, is forbidden to attend to his necessities, according to his condition, with prudence and diligence. For this is in accordance with the will of God, and no impediment to peace nor to true spiritual progress. Resolve in all things to do what thou canst and shouldst do ; and be indifferent and resigned to all that may follow external to thyself.

One thing thou canst do at all times,—offer thy will to God, and desire no longer to will any thing. For as soon as thou shalt attain to this liberty, and shalt be free on all sides (as thou mayst be at all times and in all places, whether occupied or unoccupied), thou shalt enjoy tranquillity and peace.

In this liberty of spirit consists that great blessing of which thou art in search. This

liberty is nothing else but the perseverance of the interior man within his own soul, not allowing himself to will, or desire, or seek any thing out of himself; and so long as thou shalt abide in this liberty, thou shalt rejoice in that divine servitude, in which consists the great kingdom of God which is within us.

CH. X.—THAT THE SERVANT OF GOD MUST NOT LOSE HEART, THOUGH HE FEEL WITHIN HIMSELF SOME REPUGNANCES WHICH MAY TROUBLE THIS PEACE.

THOU must expect to be often disturbed and deprived of this sweet and holy solitude and blessed freedom; for from the emotions of thy heart clouds of dust will sometimes arise, and give thee much annoyance on the road thou hast to travel. God permits this for thy greater good. Remember that this is the warfare from whence the saints bore away the crowns of highest merit. In all things that disquiet thee, say, "Behold, Lord, Thy servant; let Thy will be done in me. I know and confess that the truth of Thy word shall stand sure for ever. Thy promises are infallible, and in them do I trust. Behold Thy creature; do with me what Thou wilt. My God, I have nothing to hinder me; I am Thine alone."

Happy the soul which thus offers itself to its Lord whenever it is disquieted and disturbed. And if the conflict continue long, and thou canst not conform thy will to the will of God so quickly as thou wouldst, be not disheartened nor dismayed: persevere in prayer and self-oblation, and assuredly thou shalt gain the victory. Consider Christ's conflict in the garden, and the

recoil of His humanity when He said : **Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me.** But He immediately placed His soul in solitude, and with a free and unshackled will added with deep humility, **Yet not My will but Thine be done.** Do thou according to this pattern. When thou findest thyself in any difficulty, stir not a step till thou hast raised thine eyes to Christ on the cross ; for there shalt thou see written and engraved in large letters how thou shouldst bear thyself. Copy faithfully from that example. Be not dismayed if self-love at times disturb thee ; withdraw not thyself from the foot of the cross ; but persevere in humility till thou lose thy own will, and desire only that the will of God may be accomplished in thee ; and if thou carry away no other fruit but this from thy prayer, rest satisfied ; but if thou attain not this, thy soul will be left empty and without nourishment. Strive to let no one thing dwell in thy heart, not even for a short time, but God alone.

Keep thyself free from gall or bitterness towards any thing whatever. Look not at the wickedness and evil example of others ; but be like a little child, who, in unconsciousness of all these bitter things, passes by them uninjured and without offence.

CH. XI.—OF THE PAINS THE DEVIL TAKES TO DISTURB THIS PEACE, AND HOW WE SHOULD GUARD OURSELVES FROM HIS DEVICES.

As it is our adversary's custom to seek to devour souls, he uses all his efforts to lead them away from humility and simplicity, and to make

them attribute something to themselves and their own industry irrespective of the gift of grace, without which no man can name the name of Jesus.

And though of ourselves, and with our own free will, we may resist this grace, yet without it we have no power to accept it. So that if any man receive it not, it is by his own fault; but if he receive it, he does not and cannot do so without that same grace, which is nevertheless sufficiently offered to all.

Our enemy, then, endeavours to make us think and believe that it is of ourselves that we are more diligent than others, and better disposed to receive the gifts of God; and so to lead us to pride and to forget our own insufficiency if unaided, that thence we may be led on to despise others in our heart who do not the same good works that we do.

Therefore, unless thou be very watchful, and return instantly and with all speed, as thou hast been told, to humble, abase, and annihilate thyself, he will cause thee to fall into pride like that of the Pharisee in the gospel, who boasted of his own good works, and judged evil of others.

And by this means if he ever succeeds in obtaining possession of thy will, he will make himself master of it, and fill it with all manner of wickedness, to thy great injury and danger.

Therefore does the Lord warn us to watch and pray. Thou must stand, then, most carefully on thy guard, lest the enemy rob thee of so great a treasure as quietness and peace of mind; for he tries with all his might to rob

thee of this repose, and to keep thy soul in continual anxiety and disturbance, knowing that this is its very ruin and perdition. For if a soul be at peace, it does every thing with ease, it does great things, and all things well ; hence it perseveres willingly, and easily resists all opposition. And, on the contrary, if it be disturbed and disquieted, it does little, and that very imperfectly, is soon wearied, and, in short, lives in a fruitless martyrdom.

Wouldst thou, then, come off victorious, and suffer not the enemy to spoil thy labour, there is no one point to be more jealously watched than this,—not to suffer disquiet to enter thy soul, nor to yield it even a momentary consent.

And to learn the better how to guard thyself against the wiles of Satan, take it in this case for a certain rule that every thought which discourages and hinders thee from increasing in love and confidence towards God is a messenger of hell ; and that, as such, thou must drive it away, and neither admit it nor give it a hearing. For the office of the Holy Spirit is none other than always and on all occasions to unite the soul more and more closely to God, enkindling and inflaming it with His sweet love, and inspiring it with fresh confidence ; whilst that of the devil is just the contrary, using to this end all the means in his power, such as infusing excessive fear, aggravating our ordinary weakness, suggesting that we do not prepare ourselves as we ought to do either for confession, communion, or prayer, and so rendering us always disheartened, fearful, and disquieted.

The want of sensible devotion, and of consolation in prayer and other exercises, he makes an occasion of impatient sadness, giving the soul to understand that all is thus lost, and that it were better to leave off so many exercises. And he brings us at last into such great distrust and anxiety as to make us think that, do what we will, all is vain and fruitless ; and so our grief and fear go on increasing, till we think ourselves forgotten by God.

But it is not so indeed ; for innumerable are the benefits which would flow from aridity and want of sensible devotions, if only we understood what God would thereby work in us, asking only on our part patience and perseverance in well-doing to the best of our power. And that thou mayst understand this the better, and that the blessing and the benefit which God wills to bestow upon thee may not (from thy want of understanding) turn to thine injury, I will briefly state in this place the advantages of humble perseverance in these dry exercises, that, thus instructed, thou lose not peace of mind when thou art afflicted by this aridity of spirit and oppression of heart, because of the want of feeling and consolation in devotion, or any other temptation, however horrible it may be.

OR. XII.—THAT THE SOUL MUST NOT DISQUIET ITSELF ON ACCOUNT OF INTERIOR TEMPTATIONS.

MANY are the blessings which spiritual bitterness and aridity confer upon the soul, if only it be received with humility and patience.

Did man but understand this, he would doubt-

less feel less disquiet and grief when overtaken thereby ; because he would look upon it not as a sign of his Lord's hatred, but of His great and special love, and he would receive it as a special favour vouchsafed to him. This is very evident, if we consider that such things befall those only who desire to devote themselves unreservedly to the service of God, and to avoid all things which may offend Him ; and it seldom happens at the beginning of their conversion, but after they have served the Lord for some time, and are minded to resolve to serve Him more perfectly, and have already set their hand to the work.

We never find that sinners or persons given up to worldly things complain of such temptations ; whence it plainly appears that this is a precious food wherewith God nourishes those whom He loves ; and though it be insipid to our taste, it nevertheless strengthens us marvellously, though we perceive it not ; because the soul, finding itself in such a state of aridity, and often moreover enduring temptations the very thought of which fills her with horror, is by this means led to that fear and detestation of self and that humility which God desires to behold in her ; although, as we have said, she, not as yet understanding this secret, abhors such a path, and shrinks from walking in it ; being unwilling to be ever left without consolation and joy, and esteeming all other exercises without them to be but lost time and fruitless labour.

CH. XIII.—THAT TEMPTATIONS ARE SENT US BY GOD FOR OUR GOOD.

To understand, then, more particularly how it is that temptations are sent us by God for our good, we must consider, that, because of the evil inclination of his corrupt nature, man is proud and lofty in his conceit, always thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think.

This self-esteem is so dangerous to true spiritual progress, that the very shadow of it is a sufficient hindrance in the path of true perfection.

Therefore our most faithful God, in His loving providence over each one of us, and especially over those who have given themselves up to His service, takes care to place us in a position where we may escape so great a danger; forcing us, as it were, to come to a true knowledge of ourselves.

He did thus with the great apostle St. Peter, suffering him to deny Him, that he might learn to know and no longer to trust himself; and with the apostle St. Paul, to whom, after He had caught him up into the third heaven, and imparted to him divine secrets, He sent a troublesome temptation, in order that the knowledge of his own weakness might keep him humble; that he might learn to glory only in his infirmities; lest, as he himself says, the greatness of the revelations vouchsafed to him by God should lift him up into presumption.

God, then, in compassion for our misery and perverse will, permits these temptations to come upon us in various and sometimes very dread-

ful forms, that we may learn to know and humble ourselves, though we discern not their use.

And herein He shows forth His wisdom and goodness, because He benefits us most by means of those things which seem to us most injurious ; for we are thereby led to humble ourselves the more, which is the thing which our soul needs above all things.

For the servant of God who is troubled by thoughts like these, and by such indevotion and aridity of spirit, generally thinks that all this arises from his own imperfections, and that there cannot be another soul so sinful and so lukewarm in God's service as his. He believes that such thoughts come into the minds of those only who are forsaken by God, and that he deserves to be thus forsaken.

Hence he who once thought himself to be something comes, by the use of this bitter medicine sent him from heaven, to account himself the vilest of men, and even unworthy of the name of Christian ; nor would he ever have come to so low an estimation of himself, nor to such deep humility, had not he been forced to it by great tribulation and these strange temptations.

For one favour which God confers in this life upon the soul which has wholly committed and resigned herself to His hands is, to medicine her as He pleases, and with such medicines as He alone perfectly knows to be necessary to her health and well-being.

Our souls reap many other fruits besides this from such temptations and want of devotion.

For he who is thus afflicted is almost com-

pelled to have recourse to God, and to try to do good works, as a remedy for his distress; and in like manner, to free himself from such suffering, he sets about examining his conscience, avoiding all sin, and every thing which seems to be imperfect, or which may in any way remove him from God. And so this affliction, which he took to be so adverse and hurtful, serves afterwards as a scourge to drive him to seek God with greater fervour, and to avoid every thing which seems to be not conformable to the Divine will.

And lastly, all these tribulations, and all the toil and labour which the soul endures under these temptations and want of spiritual joys, if borne, as we have said, with patience and humility, are but a loving purgatory, and serve to win for us that crown in heaven which by such means only can be obtained, and which shall be glorious in proportion to the greatness of those toils and labours.

Hence we perceive how little reason we have to be discontented and disturbed on this account, as is the way with persons of small experience, who attribute to the devil, or to their own sins and imperfections, that which comes to them from the hand of God; who mistake tokens of love for indications of hatred, and think that these divine favours and caresses are strokes which come from an offended heart; who believe all they do to be lost and worthless, and that without remedy. Whereas, could they but believe the truth that this is no loss, but great gain; if, as they always may, they would but avail themselves of the opportunity,

and see that all is a proof of God's loving remembrance of us, it would be impossible for them to disquiet themselves or lose their peace because they are disturbed by many temptations and imaginations, and find themselves dry and indeavour in prayer and other exercises.

They would then, on the contrary, with renewed perseverance, humble their souls in the sight of the Lord, purposing in all and through all to accomplish the Divine will in whatever way the Lord may will to make use of them in this world ; using all diligence to keep themselves in peace and tranquillity ; accepting all things from their heavenly Father, in whose hand alone is the chalice which is given them to drink.

For whether trouble and temptation come to thee from the devil, or from men, or on account of sin, or in any other way, still it is God who sends it, though He offers it thee in various ways, according to His good pleasure. For it is the evil of the *trouble* alone which reaches thee ; and this is always from Him, who orders it for thy good : and although the evil of the *fault* committed, for instance, by thy neighbour in injuring or insulting thee, is contrary to His will, yet He makes use of it for thy benefit and healing.

Instead, therefore, of giving way to grief and discontent, thou shouldst thank Him with interior joy and gladness, doing all that thou canst with resolution and perseverance ; not losing time, and with it the many and great benefits which God wills that thou shouldst gain by this opportunity which He offers thee.

CH. XIV.—OF THE REMEDY AGAINST UNEASINESS UNDER FAULTS
AND FAILURES.

If at any time thou shouldst fall into some sin or negligence in word or deed, such as disquieting thyself at any thing which befalls thee, or murmuring, or listening to murmurs, or falling into disputation, or impatience, or curiosity, or suspicion of others, or into any other fault, either once or many times,—disturb not thyself, neither be grieved or disheartened at the thought of what has happened, nor be confounded within thyself ; at one time thinking that thou wilt never be free from such frailties ; at another, that they have been caused by thine own imperfection and infirmity of purpose ; or, again, representing to thyself that thou art not really walking in the Spirit and in the way of the Lord : and with a thousand other fears, burdening thy soul at every step with cowardice and discontent.

Hence it follows that thou art ashamed to appear before God, or thou approachest Him distrustfully, as if thou hadst broken faith with Him ; and, as a remedy, thou lovest time in thinking over these things, scrutinising how far thou didst it deliberately, and whether thou hast consented or not ; whether thou didst it willingly or not, or whether thou didst reject the thought.

And because thou hast not taken the right road, the more thou thinkest of it the less dost thou understand thyself, and the more does thy perplexity and trouble increase, and thy anxiety to confess ; and thou goest to confession with an uneasy fear ; and after losing much

time in making thy confession, thy spirit is but the more disquieted, from the idea of not having told all; and so thou leadest a most bitter and anxious life, with little fruit, and losing great part of its merit.

And all this comes from not understanding thy natural weakness, and not knowing how the soul ought to treat with God.

For, after having fallen into all the above-named frailties, or into any other, she may more easily treat with Him by a humble and loving conversion than by the grief and discontent she feels for the fault, dwelling on the examination of venial and ordinary sins, of which especially I am speaking.

For into such only does a soul commonly fall which is living in the manner here supposed; and I speak only of those who are leading a spiritual life, and who are striving to advance therein, and are free from mortal sin; for those who live carelessly and in mortal sin, and are continually offending God, need another kind of exhortation, and this medicine is not for them.

For such have great need to be disturbed and to weep, and to give much thought to self-examination and confession, lest through their own fault and negligence they lose the remedy needful for their salvation.

To return, then, to the subject of that peace and quietness in which the servant of God should ever keep himself,—I will say further, that in order to be full of trust in God, this conversion must be understood with reference not only to light and daily faults, but to others

greater and heavier than usual, if at any time the Lord should suffer thee to fall into such ; even though they be many and repeated, and spring not from weakness and frailty only, but from deliberation. For the contrition which fills the troubled soul with nothing but scruples will never bring it to perfection, unless it be joined to a loving confidence in the goodness and mercy of God.

And this is especially necessary for persons who desire not only to come forth from their miseries, but also wish to attain to a high degree of sanctity, and to great love and union with God.

And because many spiritual persons do not rightly apprehend this truth, they bear about with them a crushed and distrustful heart and spirit, which hinders them from advancing onward, and fitting themselves for the higher graces which one by one God had prepared for them. And they often lead a very wretched, useless, and pitiable life, because they will follow nothing but their own imaginations, and embrace not the true and salutary doctrine which leads by the royal way to the high and solid virtues of the Christian life, and to that peace which was bequeathed to us on earth by Christ Himself.

Such persons, when they find themselves in any disquietude of mind, should seek the counsel of their spiritual father, or of some one whom they think capable of giving them advice, and committing themselves to him, set their minds entirely at rest.

We will conclude in the next chapter what

we have to say of the uneasiness arising from failings.

CH. XV.—THAT THE SOUL WITHOUT LOSS OF TIME SHOULD COMPOSE HERSELF, AND SO MAKE PROGRESS.

TAKE this for thy rule whenever thou shalt fall into any fault, be it great or small, though thou mayest have committed the same four thousand times a-day, and that consciously and wilfully, —disturb not thyself with bitter discontent, disquiet not thyself, lose not time in scrutinising, but instantly acknowledge what thou hast done; and humbly considering thine own frailty, turn lovingly to thy God, and with thy mouth, or at least with thy mind, say to Him: “Lord, I have done this of myself, and nothing else could be expected of me but these and other faults; nor should I have stopped even here, but that Thy goodness raised me up, and forsook me not. I thank Thee for that from which Thou hast delivered me, and I grieve over that which I have done, because I have not responded to Thy grace. Pardon me, and give me grace never more to offend Thee; and grant that nothing may ever separate me from Thee, whom alone I desire always to serve and obey.”

Having done this, do not lose time in anxiety, thinking and imagining that the Lord has not forgiven thee, but continue thy exercises in faith and peace, as if thou hadst not fallen into any fault; and this thou must do not once only, but a hundred times if necessary, and at every moment, and with the same peace and confidence the last time as the first; for thus thou wilt greatly honour the goodness of God,

whom thou art bound to think of as all-gracious, and infinite in mercy beyond thy power to conceive.

So will nothing ever disturb thy perseverance, thy profit, and thy progress; nor wilt thou waste time fruitlessly and in vain.

And thus mayest thou also turn this fault and failing to good account, rising from it with an intense act of acknowledgment of thine own misery, abasing thyself before God, and adding thereto an act of acknowledgment of His mercy, loving and exalting it exceedingly. And this very fall will cause thee to rise higher than before, by the help which God will give thee, if thou wilt use it aright.

And if all anxious and unquiet spirits would attend to what has been here said, they would see how great is their blindness in thus losing time, to their own most serious injury.

And this warning should be carefully attended to, because it is one of the keys wherewith the soul may open to herself immense spiritual treasures and enrich herself speedily.